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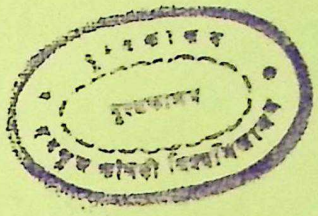

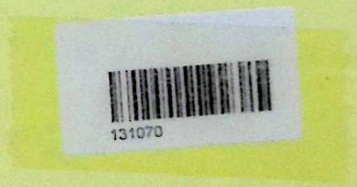

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Dharma Kumar

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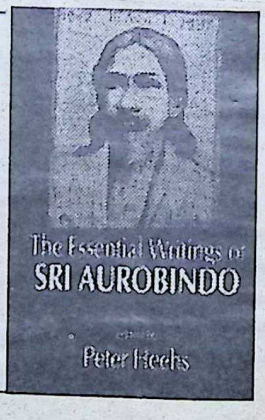

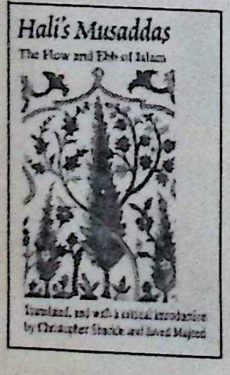

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THE BOOK REVIEW

Looking Down Into Wisdom's Well

"About her there is the elusive quality of a legend of long ago, some enchantment seems to have held her mind. She is a myth and an idea, a dream and a vision, and yet very real and present and pervasive. There are terrifying glimpses of dark corridors which seem to lead back to primeval night but also there is the fullness and warmth of the day about her. Shameful and repellent she is occasionally, perverse and obstinate, sometimes even a little hysteric, this lady with a past. But she is very lovable, and none of her children can forget her wherever they go or whatever strange fate befalls them. For she is part of them in her greatness as well as her failings, and they are mirrored in those deep eyes of her that have seen so much of life's passion and joy and folly, and looked into wisdom's well."

From Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India*

Jawaharlal Nehru was almost poetic in his descriptions of India, even when he was coolly assessing the follies that led to degradation again and again through her long history. And in the year when the Indian people are celebrating the half-century milestone in freedom, Jawaharlal Nehru's sentiments get reflected over and over in the mass of excellent material which is being produced in the country. Rabindranath Tagore said: "I love India not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil but because she has saved through tumultous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones." The modern-day inheritors of that illuminated consciousness are, in this year of celebrations, in the throes of a creativity deeply imbued with a salutary dose of soul-searching introspection.

Naturally there is an excitement in publishing, in the race to bring out volumes which has not been equalled in the last few decades. Naturally too, this excitement lends its own brand of enchantment to the reviewing of these volumes.

1997 has been a uniquely stimulating year for *The Book Review*. Each event organized by *The Book Review Literary Trust*—readings by Yasmine Gunaratne, Gita Mehta and Arundhati Roy in February, March and May, the lecture entitled "Of Biographies and Kings" by Romila Thapar in March (the final in the series of lectures to mark 20 years of *The Book Review*), a seminar on the role of reviews in which Robert B. Silvers, editor of *The New York Review of Books* and Rea Hederman, the publisher of Granta and *The New York Review* participated—was satisfyingly well-attended. Each issue, including the twin special issues published in August and September 1997 sponsored by the Department of Culture as part of its India 50 projects won for us the delighted appreciation of our readers. The credit for that goes to our reviewers and critics.

The Book Review wishes all its readers a very Happy New Year. We open 1998 with two special issues—January and February as a combined number, and March, to appear in time for the New Delhi World Book Fair (7–14 February 1998). In addition to a large number of reviews of the latest publications to hit the market, we are carrying exclusive interviews with two erudite, outspoken intellectuals of our times—Edward Said and Charles Taylor. We would like to thank *The Hindu* of Madras for sponsoring the World Book Fair Special I. We are happy to announce the forming of the *TBR Book Club* through which we hope to bring titles from a number of publishing houses within affordable reach of book-buyers.

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Rethinking Development

Pulin B. Nayak

INDIA'S ECONOMIC REFORMS AND DEVELOPMENT: ESSAYS FOR MANMOHAN SINGH

Edited by Isher Judge Ahluwalia and I.M.D. Little

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 404+viii, Rs. 575.00

The volume under review is a Festschrift in honour of Manmohan Singh on his reaching ing 65 years. The list of contributors to this volume reads like a Who's Who of India's major economists and policy makers. Coming as it does after 50 years of India's independence the volume presents a number of valuable contributions which critically review the path of economic development that India adopted after independence, assesses the brief experience of the liberalization process initiated under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh in 1991, and offers suggestions on the course that the country needs to adopt if India is to rid herself of poverty and destitution in the shortest possible time, say, within a generation.

Manmohan Singh is unique among Indian economists in having occupied virtually every major position in the bureaucratic hierarchy in India including the positions of Secretary, Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance, Governor, Reserve Bank of India and the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission and finally culminating in the position of the Finance Minister of India in Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao's government. Before joining the Indian government, Manmohan Singh had taught at Punjab University, Chandigarh, earned his doctorate at Oxford for his classic study (1964) on *India's Export Trends and the Prospects for Self-sustained Growth*, and then had also taught at the Delhi School of Economics during the late 'sixties. In between his long bureaucratic stint and the role of the helmsman in steering India's economic policy as Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh had headed the secretariat of the International South Commission. To each of these positions Manmohan Singh brought hard work, dedication and a 'quiet efficiency', as Amartya Sen points out in his essay.

Without a single exception all the essays that consist of some amount of reminiscences of Manmohan Singh's career and Manmohan, the man, testify to his sober judgement and his practical wisdom. This is found in the pieces by Bhagwati, Sen and Srinivasan, in particular. In his long bureaucratic career Manmohan, even though part of a regime that pursued state controlled planning, never really adopted the extreme versions of statist strategies, and in fact was a constant voice of moderation and wise sense.

At the very beginning one might address one troubling question regarding Manmohan Singh's career. In his long and distinguished career as a civil servant in the early '70s. Dr. Singh presided over a license-permit system of administrative controls. How was it then that the same person in June 1991 initiated a process of economic reforms, the centre piece of which was a process of financial and trade liberalization? Was there no contradiction, or, at any rate, some dissonance involved in this? Sen addresses this question in a perspicacious essay and points out that there is nothing here to give the 'contradiction school' much comfort. Even a brief perusal of Manmohan Singh's principal claim to academic fame, viz., his 1964 study, reveals quite convincingly that he had questioned the "export fatalism" that was the order of the day in the post Mahalanobis phase of Indian Planning. To Dr. Singh it seemed obvious to argue that the high volume of import requirements to sustain a high growth rate for the economy at large could only be paid for with growing export earnings. The argument for a freer trade regime was derived not from the theoretical case for gains from trade, which was of course well established, but on careful empirical study. From the theoretical standpoint, it was of course well known by the early '60s that the supposed gains from the classical versions of free trade would be reduced or lost if one were to consider monopoly elements, i.e. if the small country assumption is dispensed with, or if in the context of growing economies, the terms of trade of a growing country becomes so adverse that 'immiserization' comes about, a result that was elegantly shown by Jagdish Bhagwati in the late '50s. But despite these well known caveats, it was undoubtedly the case that trade would be welfare enhancing even in a tariff and quota ridden world, and more specifically, that if trade barriers were to be reduced, welfare improvements would be brought about in most situations. It was this view that Manmohan Singh argued for in his 1964 work, not in the manner or in words that might be used by the ideologues of free trade, but as a circumspect and sober scholar. That countries that adopted the export orientation strategy used it to spectacular advantage as demonstrated by the historical experience of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, is already part of established development theory. To that extent Manmohan Singh's original thesis has already been shown to be consistent with facts in an almost conclusive manner.

Without a single exception all the essays that consist of some amount of reminiscences of Manmohan Singh's career and Manmohan, the man, testify to his sober judgement and his practical wisdom. This is found in the pieces by Bhagwati, Sen and Srinivasan, in particular. In his long bureaucratic career Manmohan, even though part of a regime that pursued state controlled planning, never really adopted the extreme versions of statist strategies, and in fact was a constant voice of moderation and wise sense.

As Amartya Sen points out, when Manmohan was a bureaucrat he had to carry out the broad policies that were required of him, but in 1991 when he occupied the post of Finance Minister, he could make his own policies. Thus, to that extent, there is no contradiction as such in the four decade long stance of policy making in Manmohan Singh's career. He in fact returns to, and tries to put to work, those propositions in 1991 that he helped establish so meticulously three decades earlier in his doctoral thesis.

We now come to an examination of the economic reform process that was initiated in June 1991. The first point to note about the policy response in favour of a move towards a broadbased liberalization process in trade and industry

and a move towards deregulation was actuated by the crisis situation the country found itself in at that time. India's foreign exchange reserves were at an all time, dangerously, low level and there was a wide fiscal imbalance. Through the decade of the 'eighties the current expenditure of the central government systematically exceeded the current tax and non-tax revenues, resulting in a negative BCR (balance in current revenues) which meant that the government had to borrow, both domestically as well as internationally, year after year. By the early 'nineties the domestic as well as foreign debt had swollen quite substantially, pushing up interest rates, and then ultimately making debt servicing costlier. By the early 'nineties observers of India's macroeconomy were beginning to worry about the sustainability of the government debt. India's credit rating in the international arena was on a downward slide and there were fears in early 1991 that India may not be in a position to service its foreign debt. It is in this context that Manmohan Singh took over the reins of economic policy making and decided to devalue the rupee, in two separate steps, to enable Indian exports to be more competitive. This exchange rate correction was perhaps inescapable.

Secondly, Manmohan Singh was taking over the reins of economic policy making in a situation where communism had collapsed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the adherents of socialism across the globe appeared to be in retreat. Anything that had a remote link with the public sector in any setting, be it the U.K. or India, appeared to be suspect in the eyes of the acolytes of Milton Friedman, Friedrich von Hayek, or even a Marg-

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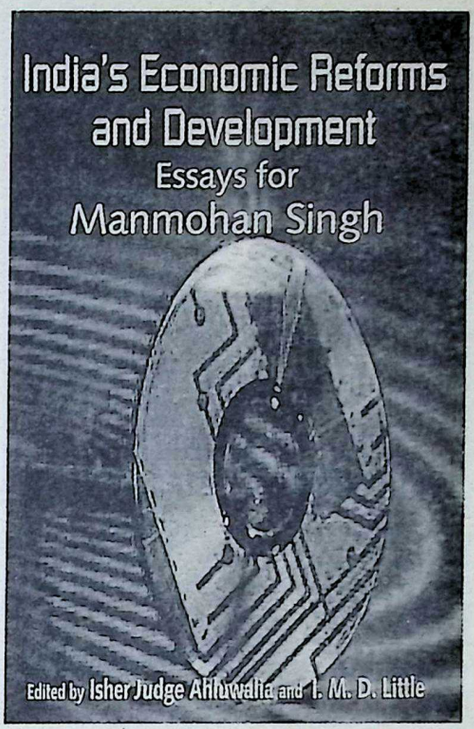
aret Thatcher. The policy regime that Manmohan helped bring about was perhaps too enamoured of the beneficence of the market mechanism.

The latter helped bring about a mood wherein the call of the hour was privatization. As in most other antidotes, it was not emphasized carefully enough that privatization may be good in some spheres, but bad in others. Even in sectors such as education and health it was simplistically argued by many that privatization was the answer to the long standing ills in these sectors. The detrimental consequences of educational institutions and nursing homes run with the objective of profit maximization are already too apparent to be detailed here. There is substantial research which rejects the thesis that privatization is an automatic corrective solution in commodity producing and infrastructure sectors. It is unfortunate that the rush to privatize syndrome has been one of the fallouts of Manmohanomics. A charitable interpretation of the latter syndrome would be the case of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. Perhaps Manmohan Singh himself would tread much more warily when confronted with the public-private sector issue and look at each case on its own merit.

It needs however to be emphasized, as Sen so forcefully does, that there were too many areas where the government was overactive, to senseless purpose and actually adding negative value, and that there were the important areas of education and health where



state intervention was well below par. It is precisely in the latter areas that the state ought to have played an activist role. India today has the largest mass of illiterates in the world. It has the highest number of child workers in the world, boys and girls who ought to be in schools, studying and learning and enjoying their childhood, rather than having to go through the drudgery of backbreaking work to support their families at ages as low as 7 or 8.

It is unfortunate that in the onward rush towards economic reforms these aspects have not been given the due importance they should have been. Quite clearly, much more needs to be done in the social sectors. It would be unfair to criticize the new policy makers for the long years of neglect of these important sectors, but there is reason to believe that the policy initiatives of the past five or six years in these spheres have been far from satisfactory.

There is one area where Manmohan Singh deserves the kudos that is truly due to him. It is in the area of tax policy. The objective of macroeconomic stabilization that Dr. Singh sought to bring about rested on the two legs of expenditure control, via limiting the fiscal deficit, on one hand, and tax reform to boost the tax to GDP ratio, on the other. In order to promote the latter, one of the first acts of Manmohan Singh was to establish a tax reform committee, headed by Dr. Raja Chelliah. The Committee submitted an interim report in 1992 and the final report came in 1993.

There is one area where Manmohan Singh deserves the kudos that is truly due to him. It is in the area of tax policy. The objective of macro-economic stabilization that Dr. Singh sought to bring about rested on the two legs of expenditure control, via limiting the fiscal deficit, on one hand, and tax reform to boost the tax to GDP ratio, on the other. In order to promote the latter, one of the first acts of Manmohan Singh was to establish a tax reform committee, headed by Dr. Raja Chelliah.

Among other things one of the important suggestions of the Committee, in the sphere of direct taxes, was to limit the top marginal rate to 40 per cent. This was in consonance with the large volume of theoretical work in the early '70s by the Nobel Laureate Jim Mirrlees, A.B. Atkinson and others which showed that the top marginal tax rates under a wide variety of circumstances ought not to exceed 35 to 40 per cent. This theoretical insight was actually supported in the tax policies of the U.K., under the James Meade Committee, of Sweden, under the Committee headed by Lodin, and in the U.S., where policy formulations were made by Martin Feldstein and David Bradford, among others. This insight was also used by several developing countries. In the Indian case, the lowering and the simplification of the personal income tax rates, along with the rationalization and lowering of the Union excise and customs duties are possibly the single major tangible contribution of the reform regime headed by Manmohan Singh.

This is no ordinary achievement either if only because it denotes a dramatic change in mindset in matters relating to economic policy making. Highly progressive tax structures, with the top marginal income tax rates going up to 97.25 per cent in the late 'sixties in India, for example, used to be the order of the day more than a quarter century back in the naive belief that this would help promote distributive justice. Top tax rates of around 95 per cent were also in place in the U.K. in the late 'sixties. The consequences of such penal tax rates would have been obvious to any observer endowed with a minimal common sense: widespread evasion and tax avoidance in the case of India, and a propensity to emigrate out as in the case of the U.K. Today limiting top tax rates to 30 to 40 per cent is part of standard wisdom. Such a policy not only helps serve efficiency better because it is less distortive of economic choices, but it is also the case that lower tax rates with a wider base and greater compliance is more equitable as compared to highly graduated tax structures with widespread evasion.

Where would India be today had she, instead of adopting the Nehru-Mahalanobis type planned economic model that gave primacy to the production of capital goods and emphasis on self sufficiency, gone in for the so-called Bombay alternative, advocated by Vakil and Brahmananda? The latter model rested on the idea that the surplus labour in India could be mobilized to engage in simple investment schemes. It would have meant investing more in agriculture to increase the supply of wage goods, which in turn would have allowed a larger mobilization of labour in investment activities without inflationary consequences. This counterfactual question is posed in an insightful paper by Lord Meghnad Desai whose academic antecedents go back to the Bombay School. Desai has no hesitation in concluding that the alternative course would have been better for India, for the price of self sufficiency was paid for in terms of low growth of per capital income and employment. This problem must remain a central conundrum to all observers of the Indian development process for years to come. It is plausible to hold the position that the path of centralized economic planning in a mixed economic setting that we chose for ourselves with Nehru at the helm of affairs and at a conjuncture of the world as it obtained in the early 'fifties, had a certain political and historic logic, and even inevitability. In his piece Jagdish Bhagwati argues that India's economic policy during the '50s was essentially 'on track'. To him the problem came only after the '50s when India turned to the import substitution strategy while East Asia chose the export promotion strategy.

Montek Ahluwalia makes a cogent case for focussing on infrastructure development, such as roads, ports, telecommunications etc. which have turned out to be a serious constraint in realizing higher growth rates. In this context it is worth emphasizing that one needs to employ user charges, both as a device to enhance efficiency in resource use as

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well as serve equity. Ashok Gulati makes a case for a full scale integration of Indian agriculture with global trade possibilities rather than having India buy at the margin internally in years of shortage and selling in years of surplus production. This is possibly based on a naive view of the benefits of globalization. The moment one realizes that the food security question, particularly for a large country like India, is highly susceptible to international strategic power play, one may well begin to arrive at different conclusions. C. Rangarajan makes a sustained case for limiting inflation to, say, 6 per cent if one is not to nullify the salutary effects of the growth process. While lauding Manmohan Singh for initiating the fiscal stabilization process in 1991, Vijay Joshi is of the view that the actual fiscal adjustment was less than adequate. In examining the Indian stock market and the question of corporate control, Ajit Singh makes a case for using the models of Germany and Japan that have had no open market in corporate control. T.N. Srinivasan examines the growth performance of Indian exports since 1986, and finds that though this has been impressive as compared to the earlier record, it pales into insignificance when contrasted with the low wage-cost economies of the Far East. The bane of India's exports generally has been low quality, lack of timely delivery and a general lack of reliability. These problems are no doubt exacerbated by the inadequate infrastructural services.

Deepak Lal examines the link between economic liberalization and poverty alleviation and argues, based on some empirical work, that there is a positive effect of positive income growth on mass poverty redressal. He goes on to examine the rival philosophies of 'classical liberalism' of Smith and Hume and 'distributive egalitarianism' which is captured in some form of a Bergson-Samuelson type social welfare function and shows a preference for the former. He observes that there is no case for attempting to institute a western style welfare state in India. This is possibly an empty question because with poverty levels being as high as around 35 to 40 per cent of the population, the objective conditions pertaining in India are too far out of line with any fancy of instituting a western style welfare state. Lal also goes on to argue that transfer payments to the needy ought to be done via private agencies. Anyone familiar with the activities of at least some of the private agencies out of the large heterogeneous group in the country would cringe at this thought. He also observes that while there is a case for public financing of primary education and health care, there is no case for public production in the latter, whatever that might mean. If it means dispensing with municipal and village schools and state run primary health centres in favour of private schools and nursing homes all around, it might unsettle even the staunchest proponents of privatization. Examining the post reform phase of poverty alleviation Suresh Tendulkar shows that while urban poverty increased moderately after 1991 and declined steeply by 1993–94, rural poverty declined sharply in 1992 and reached the pre-reform level by 1993–94.

Kirit Parikh makes a case for employment guarantee type of schemes (EGS) to ensure food security for the poor. Amaresh Bagchi examines the vexing question of tax assignment in the Indian federation and Raja Chelliah offers a scenario of cooperative federalism in the post reforms, liberalized setting. V.A. Pai Panandikar reviews the changing class character of the Indian ruling elite and argues that the new power elite may not be concerned with the larger issues of the Indian economy. This view is possibly simplistic. Pai Panandikar goes on to argue that the group that is ultimately going to make a difference in the years to come is the formidable Indian middle class.

This is a wonderful collection of essays. The editors of this volume, Isher Ahluwalia and Ian Little, have done a commendable job in bringing together such a fine collection of Indian economists, some of whom have played a significant part in contributing to development policy issues in the past four decades, to write in honour of Manmohan Singh. As we step into the new millenium in less than two years, the course of development that we choose to embark on from now on is going to make a material difference to a vast mass of humanity living in this subcontinent.

This is a wonderful collection of essays. The editors of this volume, Isher Ahluwalia and Ian Little, have done a commendable job in bringing together such a fine collection of Indian economists, some of whom have played a significant part in contributing to development policy issues in the past four decades, to write in honour of Manmohan Singh.

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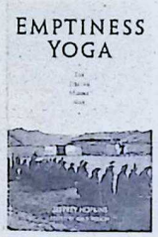

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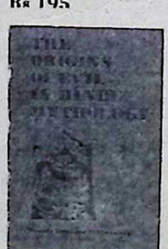

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Woman's Body—A Resituating the Self

Malavika Karlekar

A PASSION FOR DIFFERENCE: ESSAYS IN ANTHROPOLOGY AND GENDER

By Henrietta Moore

Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 177, price not mentioned.

EMBODIMENT: ESSAYS ON GENDER AND IDENTITY

Edited by Meenakshi Thapan

Oxford University Press, Delhi (for the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library), 1997, pp. 340, Rs. 495.00

Over twenty years ago, senior social anthropologists Andre Beteille and T.N. Madan edited a volume on "personal accounts of fieldwork" (Beteille and Madan 1975); the authors noted in their introduction that few anthropologists had written about that unique *rite de passage*—fieldwork, and their experiences of it. While pointing out that:

> there is a misunderstanding here which lies unexamined in the implicit opposition between the personal and the collective dimensions of anthropological research, between subjectivity (or inter-subjectivity),

they nonetheless cautioned against excessive freedom of the individual observer; at the same time his (sic) personality was not to be "driven underground" (pp. 5–6). Today, the discipline of social anthropology is alive with debates on frontiers and limits, on questions of who is coopting whom, collaboration, contestation and so on; though these exercises date back to Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), in the present day, they occupy a significant space in a range of discourses. That women anthropologists have been particularly sensitive to these dilemmas is evident from the number of books and essays which have emerged around their multiple roles, questions of inter-subjectivity, of Otherness and contradictions inherent in them (Bell *et al* 1993; Dube 1974; Karlekar 1995; Panini 1991; Schenk-Sandbergen 1995).

The two books being reviewed here—one by a British anthropologist and the other edited by an Indian social anthropologist—extends the debate further; in particular, the concepts of equality and difference, so vital to contemporary feminist scholarship are put under the microscope. After pointing out that difference "exerts an uncanny fascination for us" Henrietta Moore, who heads the newly-established Gender Institute at the London School of Economics looks at its meaning(s) particularly in the context of sameness and sharing; Moore questions her positionality thus:

> If I belong somewhere, then I speak and write from there, and the specifics of that location matter. But all locations are provisional, held in abeyance. One is never truly anywhere and if locations and positions are to be specified, they will always be in the plural (p. 2).

Having stated a continuous interrogation of her position, Moore admits that though the crisis of location is 'productive', it is nonetheless "personally terrifying". In small part Moore's view (one baulks at saying 'position') is a reaction to dominant trends in an anthropology overly self-conscious in its commitment to a fair representation of the Other. But in far greater measure it is an enunciation of well-thought views on her self and her work, her multiple roles interweaving in the creation—or questioning—of who she is and in the present context, where she is as a feminist anthropologist. Meenakshi Thapan's edited volume of 13 essays—mostly by sociologists and social anthropologists—looks at the female body in both its "material and representational aspects", a persistent theme in Moore's work.

Though she returns many times to the almost metaphoric notion of being in many places, *A Passion for Difference* has a very clear understanding of the contemporary feminist anthropologist's tasks and concomitant dilemmas. Coming to grips with the

feminist interlocution of the sex/gender dichotomy, Moore's notions of 'lived anatomy' and embodied inter-subjectivity brings her to the interface between psychoanalysis and anthropology and the Lacanian concept of mirror-stage, the duality within the so-called integrated self. Questioning the comfortable 'sex is a biological given and gender is a social construct' reasoning she points out that the concern with understanding gender "has effectively left the relationship between sex and gender very under-theorized" (p. 12). For if gender is variable, different across cultures, so is sexuality and sexual difference. And indeed, there is an umbilical relationship between sex and gender as the possession of genitalia means different things in different cultures: "with regard to gender, the body and sexual difference" it is important to work out "what bearing social and cultural discourses have on individual experience" (p. 16). And where do anthropologists get their models of individuals but from psychoanalytic theory: however, so far these have been the theories of objects-relation theory, ego psychology and the works of Freud and Melaine Klein.

The model of the rational human (usually white and male) who is in charge of himself and his experiences dominates; citing anthropological evidence from among the Hua and the Tchambuli, Moore goes on to show that there is no such thing as "a single, undisputed and fixed gender" (p. 40). She relies heavily on Lacan's view of the self as constituted by representation, and elaborate systems of signification which involve many other selves and multiple understandings of gender. Though ultimately she disagrees with Lacan's phallocentricism, she finds his argument of the split self who has to accommodate the Other, the alter ego within itself, most useful in understanding the strands which go to make up gender identity.

Expectedly, such constructions include agency and resistance; and such resistances often grow in the encounter between stereotypes of sexed and gendered beings and their actual representations; for identities are the outcome of "practical engagement" and "have both individual and collective dimensions" (p. 53). Moore successfully asks the reader to question notions like socialization, the staple ingredient of sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists of education who are charged with explaining how cultures reproduce themselves. The relevant point for Moore is that this contestation often takes place *within* gendered beings as well as between them and their wider Othered existence. But why do people resist conforming to the dominant discourse on gender? Or to put it differently, why do some opt for one model and reject others? In this context, Moore discusses Wendy Holloway's notion of 'investment' where individuals choose one model rather than another because there is more in it for them and so on. While she is a little uneasy with the words "economistic overtones", Moore nonetheless finds the concept useful. Apart from the economistic overtone I feel that it is important to locate the notions of choice and of agency in different cultures: choice implies a voluntariness which feminist anthropologists from the South—and indeed most feminists in the region—would argue is a chimera for the large bulk of women.

When poverty dictates that the real choice is between survival and its negation, coping as well as bargaining strategies imply a degree of ad hocism as multiple identities and varying perceptions of the self emerge (see Bina Agarwal's recent paper (1997) on bar-

In large parts of India across communities and castes, accepted socialization patterns stress the gradual erasure of the female persona: the lively, articulate child gives way to the shy adolescent who soon becomes the mute, silent bride who cannot speak above a whisper; yet, there is "intentionality in nonresponse" and passive states "are not seen as lacking in intentionality" (Das 1989) as a female moves from one stage of the life cycle to another.

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gaining and gender relations); some of these may contest the dominant ideology, at other moments there is mute acquiescence. Here even agency is often enough passive effacement; in large parts of India across communities and castes, accepted socialization patterns stress the gradual erasure of the female persona: the lively, articulate child gives way to the shy adolescent who soon becomes the mute, silent bride who cannot speak above a whisper; yet, there is "intentionality in nonresponse" and passive states "are not seen as lacking in intentionality (Das 1989) as a female moves from one stage of the life cycle to another. Such states are required formats on which the hieroglyphs of a dominant socialization are imprinted.

There are some exceptions: the growing incidence of domestic violence and instances of women's resistance are the result of choice-making and active agency when survival is at stake not only due to poverty. Such agency occurs in situations where the choice is between bare existence and mutilation, if not death. Today, wifehood in Indian society has become a site for contestation—albeit among a small minority—one where the overweening model of the obedient, acquiescent woman, a mute pawn in elaborate familial negotiations is being interrogated by a handful of those so constructed: since the late seventies, the women's movement and a more receptive State machinery which has brought about legal and administrative reforms encourage abused women to speak out; as the State and voluntary organizations rupture the public/private dichotomy by actions and legislations, multiple viewings of the conjugal relationship become available based often on making public the private anguish of women (Karlekar forthcoming). As women actively subvert reigning stereotypes, notions of masculinity and femininity and the sanctity of the family are interrogated in a scenario of flux and change.

Moore returns to her basic premise which privileges the fluidity of life and that of lived beings: in "Bodies on the Move: Gender, Power and Material Culture" she questions the idea of resistance. When is one resisting and when is one just making a mistake? She says

> The issue of interpretation is an important one because it highlights the fact that dominant structures and discourses involve a high degree of indeterminancy. . . Dominant discourses of gender, for example, may seem removed from the experiences of individual women, but that very distance means that they are rarely directly challenged by the vagaries of lived experience (p. 83).

Today, wifehood in Indian society has become a site for contestation—albeit among a small minority—one where the overweening model of the obedient, acquiescent woman, a mute pawn in elaborate familial negotiations is being interrogated by a handful of those so constructed. . .

But what does challenged imply? When we are talking of individual resistances/rejections/incomprehension, these are challenges enough, though perhaps not of a dimension to change dominant stereotypes. Nor, admits Moore, are stereotypes impervious to change and reinterpretation.

Into this scenario of change, contradiction, contestation and a state of ensuing flux, enters the feminist anthropologist, the baggage of post-modernism if not post-post modernism as Moore says, resting heavily in her back pack. In "Master Narratives: Anthropology and Writing", the author portrays her role and those of the sorority in engaging prose. Going over terrain now made familiar by several anthropologists (Bruner 1983; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz, 1973, 1983, 1992; Goody 1992; Srinivas 1966, 1983; Turner and Bruner 1986), Moore reiterates the act of anthropological story-telling, of textualizing as actors (or actresses) negotiate and create meanings. For the anthropologist is engaged in "knowledge creation" and not in "knowledge production". The ambiguity of the anthropologist towards her subject matter is clear as she interlocutes her relationship with those she is studying; in the process, she engages in "a relationship between the many selves of each individual self, its other selves" (p. 115). And this after all is the fountainhead of Henrietta Moore's engagement with difference, one where her infectious "passionate commitment" encourages a questioning, a resituating of the self in the yet emotionally challenging exercise of living and telling of many lives.

In *Embodiment: Essays on Gender and Identity*, edited by Meenakshi Thapan, scholars from the fields of social anthropology, sociology, history, English literature and political science go beyond parameters of sexual difference and look at the notion of embodiment, of how the sexed body is represented, understood, manipulated and, finally as an active agential being, resists and speaks out. All but three of the essays deal with the Indian woman and their embodiment. As anthropologists, both Moore and Thapan are committed to understanding the woman as a lived body, as a physical being which is vital to the constitution of individual identity; as anthropologists look at what is prosaically known as individuals in society, the intersubjectivity of such beings is of vital importance. Or to put it in the argot of the sociologist of education—of which Thapan is one—socialization processes bridge the gap between the individual and society. Such processes ensure the transmission of socio-cultural norms with their inherent roles as well as regulations across generations. Implicit in such a process then are notions of appropriate gender-differentiated behaviour. However, as several essays in *Embodiment* argue, such processes are contested and rejected, and other models internalized.

The fact that though there are plenty of stereotypes of the hirsute, virile male and the docile, soft female, the *ardhanarisvara* reminds us that there is a certain inherent tilt towards androgyny in the Hindu notion of gendered beings; can we then view control of women and in particular their sexuality as a valorization of the model of the meek and submissive woman, one which rejects the implications of androgyny? In the volume, Susan Visvanathan looks at the notion of androgyny through the life of Sr Philomena-Marie who "took on the State, the capitalists and the Establishment Church" in her struggle for the rights of fisherfolk in Kerala. When she leads the fishers, she is a Bride of Christ; and when she talks management theory and practice "she could be either male or female, nun or priest, Hindu or Christian" (p. 303). In other words she is speaking and working in the discourse of what Vishvanathan calls "common humanity"; if as the author argues, androgyny is about "fearlessness and role choices which are not biologically defined" can forms of resistance to stereotypification be viewed in terms of a struggle towards the androgynous persona? As Vishvanathan does not look at the genesis of the term—though she mentions the Jungian anima-animus relationship—one wonders whether common humanity can result in the degendering of the superwoman stereotype into an androgyne.

While Vishvanathan has provided us with an interesting angle from which to look at self-constructions of personhood, it still is the case that, as Thapan argues, the "woman's body is very much a disciplined body whether this is done through social practices or through individual intervention" (p. 26). In other words, not too many have the choice of re-fashioning their gendered identities: the papers in the first section entitled "The Socially Constructed Body: Caste, Community and Nationalism" deal with the violent control of female bodies and their victimhood in circumstances where the boundaries between approved behaviour and transgressions were ruptured. In her detailed and well-argued analysis of the celebrated case of the rape of Elokeshi, a young Brahmin woman by the Mohunt, Madhavchandra Giri of the famed Tarakeshwar temple, and subsequent murder by her enraged husband, Tanika Sarkar develops the notion of the emergent public sphere. Arguing convincingly that there was space for the commodification of the event through popular bazaar culture as debates on Hinduism and colonialism had yet to gain ground, she takes us to the fascinating world of popular representations in Kalighat paintings and Battala metal engravings; lampoons and the growing world of theatre where scandals of the kind generated by the Elokeshi event made fortunes epitomized the growth of different discourses and language usage.

But above all, Elokeshi's violated body—first through rape and then through its brutal annihilation—became a symbol of what women were not to become, a theme which again gathered considerable momentum in the days surrounding Partition. In her discussion of *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* by Jyotirmoyee Devi, one of Bengal's established women writers, Jashodhara Bagchi shows how Sutara, a young Hindu girl who is molested and then saved by her father's Muslim friend in what was then East Bengal is subsequently treated as an outcaste: as a woman who had transgressed the "ideology of the purity of the community" (p. 86). Sutara is no longer acceptable to her family. But there is more to it for "the female body becomes the pawn whenever there are crises in the social order" (p. 77); as Urvashi Butalia argues in her discussion of abducted and widowed women after Partition, if it were not for a discourse other than the official one could easily be "forgiven for thinking that partition meant only government-to-government debate and decisions and negotiations at the political level" (p. 90). Fiction, songs, cinema and story-telling within families spoke of other realities—and feminist scholars have sought to recover these voices in order to provide "a gendered history of partition" (p. 91).

Rehabilitation of abducted women and widows became of primary importance, with widows attracting the particular attention of the patriarchal state. When juxtaposed with abducted

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women, the sexuality of widows was viewed as being intact: they had not been cast into the hands of the Other, and hence been irrevocably defiled. However, when a category on their own, so to speak, widows and widowhood are viewed very differently; Uma Chakravarti has argued that widowhood among the upper castes "is a state of social death" where she is alienated from "reproduction and sexuality" as well as excluded from the "functioning social unit of the family" (Chakravarti 1995:2248). I would argue that though the practices of widow remarriage and levirate re-integrate widows in some communities, by and large, families are often unsure of how to deal with a widow's changed social, familial and sexual status. This liminal being and her attempts at re-constituting her identity is the subject of much censure and of course a favoured topic of novelists and poets. Susie Tharu's impressive analysis in "The Impossible Subject—Caste in the Scene of Desire" of two short stories, Gita Hariharan's "The Remains of the Feast" and Baburao Bagul's "Maran Swasth Hoth Aahe" (Death will be a Comfort) revolves around a "widow's relationship with a younger person in the family" (p. 257). In Hariharan's story, the 90-year-old widow who is dying of cancer, suddenly bursts forth with desires for "everything that has been forbidden" (p. 257). The great-granddaughter, complicit in the old woman's defiant reaffirmation of life, feeds her *bhel puri* from bazaar shops, shaves her legs, plucks her eyebrows. Here again as with Pandu's widowed mother in Bagul's story who takes a lover, conventional stereotypes of widowhood are ruptured; the two women seek a new meaning to their lives based on desire, self-approval and physical satisfaction—thereby rejecting traditional embodiments of their status.

The widows' agency is sharply contrasted to that of the ballet dancer who as Anna Aalten shows distorts her body so as to comply with the reigning image of the sylph-like figure with slim thighs and legs. Aalten's interesting description not only introduces us to the subterranean other side of ballet and its rigours, but also displays the potential of feminist anthropology in deconstructing cultural representations. Patricia Uberoi's incisive and well-knit-together exegesis of *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam* carries this potential further. We learn of podoerotics, of the erotic mystery behind women's feet, as this film of yesteryear reminds us of the almost forgotten styles of courtship and love. Uberoi shows how middle class morality eschewed passion—its excess was destructive both within marriage and of course in a relationship outside of it. Eyes, feet, nuanced gestures gently nudge for space in women's expressions of their bodies and of themselves in attempts to come to terms with what Uberoi calls "the problematics of romance" (p. 150). One wishes that the author had developed her analysis of podoerotics and integrated it more in her situating of the various women/actresses in their acquiescence/resistance/ambivalence.

Implicit in the idea of embodiment is that of context, spatial, emotional, physical and that which is borne of relationships. Using field data from a village outside Bangalore Seemanthini Niranjana explores women's use of space and the recognition of the household as women's space. Access or lack of it is often determined by women's caste and class origins, with more restrictions on those from the upper caste. In delineating differences in access Niranjana displays the importance of interrogating the sex/gender dichotomy and of privileging the subtle interplay of the biological and that which goes into constructions of gender. That such constructions vary as do notions of sexuality is evidenced in Meenakshi Thapan's "Femininity and its Discontents—The Woman's Body in Intimate Relationships". Setting out to understand how middle class urban married women conceive of their bodies, oppression and violence, Thapan concludes that in order to understand marital relationships, it is necessary to unravel the delicate web of negotiation, manipulation, collusion as well as of oppression and violence. Women's understandings of their femininity—and hence of their embodied beings—are often controlled by stereotypes such as the beauty queen syndrome, aggressive advertising and increasing availability of a range of aids to make the physical body more appealing. Thus, paradoxically, "women too play a role in colluding with their oppressors by accepting prevailing definitions of femininity and the female body"; this in turn is translated "into their own ideal femininity so that its oppressive nature remains hidden even to them" (p. 188). However, that the psychological and physical oppression which leads to this 'false consciousness' (see Bina Agarwal, 1997) can equally develope into a site for resistance is a point which Thapan does not really consider.

While Thapan's views are constrained by an ethnographic field, that women in particular situations allow themselves to be manipulated by dominant discourses is forcefully brought out by Poonam Zutshi in a discussion of menstruation and witchhood. Arguing that "the symptoms women present classifiable today under the Pre-Menstrual Syndrome and Menopause, overlap with profiles of melancholy and hysteria" (p. 203) she shows through case studies of women in the East Coast of the USA that women themselves viewed themselves as witch-like. Witches were women who were different, who did not conform to stereotypes and as a consequence threatened established power relations. Thus to be witch-like was being out of control, when the sense of self was drastically altered for those few days in the month.

Zutshi argues that "the medicalization of the pre-menstrual phase masks the truth of this phase" (p. 222) where different levels of consciousness and awareness of the body may result in different levels of creativity. However, here as with Meenakshi Thapan's sample, women respond in a culturally ordained manner; they embody existing stereotypes which more often than not negate resistance and the will to question. Vidhu Verma's critical reading of Helene Cixous shows us how those who question create their own practice of writing—*l'ecrtiture feminine*. Foregrounding her discussion of Cixous with a look at the equality and difference debate, Verma feels that juridical equality "does not deny sexual difference but neutralizes it in favour of non-sexed individuals with identical juridical roles" (p. 274). Verma points out that Cixous' tactile language which is close to the body have led some to claim she is a biological essentialist. On the other hand, by recognizing that sexual difference cannot be subsumed or wished away by the equality debate, Cixous draws attention to manifestations of that difference which leads, she believes, to a writing with several beginnings, "a text that goes on and on" (p. 278).

Jean D'Cunha's "Prostitution: The Contemporary Feminist Discourse" and Kalpana Viswanath's "Shame and Control: Sexuality and Power in Feminist Discourse in India" both look at current viewings of women's sexuality and its violation. Interestingly, though she does not use the term sex worker', D'Cunha's thrust is that prostitution is often a survival strategy in a country like India. The differences between the North and the South are discussed in some detail. The sex worker provides pleasure, the wife provides off spring; this age-old differentiation in the sexual services of women persists, strengthening the prejudices against women who have little option but to live off their labour of a very specific kind. Here feminist notions of shame with which Viswanath deals become important markers in how women view themselves. Anthropology has viewed shame as a marker of women's behaviour which is then internalized by them; on the other hand feminists from the autonomous women's movement in India view shame as a patriarchal construct, one which is used by men to control women. Viswanath feels that shame is more than a construct, an external imposition; it has something to do with how women view themselves, and if being ashamed of acts of sexual violation assails a woman's sense of self, shame is a necessary response.

It is almost as though ending *Embodiment* with an essay which deals with the emotion of shame, Thapan is setting out a later agenda, another volume which will look more at what Veena Das has called "the languages of pain" (1966). For though the book is a significant contribution to the growing debate (see also Uberoi [editor] 1996) around sexuality, sexual differences and bodily representations in women's studies there are a few areas of silence. Discussions of gendered beings and their multiple realities must take into account the powerlessness of women who have no control over their bodies and reproductive selves. When repeated pregnancies and childbirths become protracted moments—if not aeons—of deep physical and psychological suffering, selfhood is constructed on many levels. There is no essay on this vital aspect of women's lives, nor for instance on legal discourse which has actively interrogated social, domestic and personal spaces, encouraging interventions of various kinds. The role of the educational system—particularly all girls' institutions—in perpetuating stereotypes as well as setting up resistances, both of a passive and active nature—a subject close to Thapan's heart who acknowledges more than once Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural and symbolic reproduction, too goes unnoticed. But then one is only too familiar with the unenviable task of an editor, as papers fall by the wayside and contributors cry off—a point to which Thapan drew attention at a dialogue focused around *Embodiment* at the Nehru Memorial Museum Library in October.

Any talk of gender today must take into consideration constructions of both femininity as well of masculinity. But as was clear from the discussion in the NMML, not many scholars of either gender seem interested in looking at masculinity, the implications of the women's movement on men, or at their attempts at coming to terms with what Robert Bly (1992) in his "book about men" says it means for a young man to have "a remote father, an absent father, a workaholic father"... that this reluc-

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nce is not a singularly Indian experi-
ce is clear from a reading of both
oks: can one then conclude that, not-
ithstanding a few men's studies
urses in the US, gender studies will
ntinue to be the domain of women
d a few concerned men for quite
me years to come?

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Alchemy Or Fool's Gold?

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan

RECONSTRUCTING POLITICAL THEORY: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Mary Lyndon Shanley and Uma Narayan

Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 225, price not mentioned.

Feminist political theory both occupies important conceptual ground as a critique of the major tradition of western philosophical thought that informs all political theory from Plato to John Rawls, as well as connects in significant ways to the questions raised by women's struggles in the feminist movement. This collection has therefore much to offer that is intellectually challenging and politically valuable to a beleagured feminist community in India.

Not that there is any easy universality claimed for the arguments offered in these essays. On the contrary, their relevance is limited to the historical specificity of the 'nineties in which they are written, and to their geographical location in the United States. These facts also buttress the authors' post-modern disinclination for "grand theory," as the Introduction avers. Despite such disavowals—and indeed this is the post-modern contradiction—the facts of the situation—globalization and its attendant phenomena, emigration, multinational capitalism, and cultural imperialism—and the political language of their discussion—democracy, equality, justice, welfare, along with ethnicity, multiculturalism, secularism—not only permit but demand responsiveness from others distant from these sites of enunciation. Feminism too is nothing without at least the premiss of widespread gendered disempowerment, across differences among women, to underpin its work. It is in the framework of such distance and proximity, particularity and comparability, contingency and universality that we recuperate western feminist theory in our context.

Feminist theory is not easy to do, or at least should not be, if only because of these constraints of "reality"—which are also, of course, the conditions of its possibility. But feminism is concerned, beyond the understanding and interpretation of reality, with the questions of restructuring it and the means of such restructuring: and it is in these differences of vision and politics that conflicts arise.

Three areas of concern are identified by the editors as central to feminist critiques of political theory: independence and dependency, the public and the private, and citizenship and political empowerment; and the eleven essays that constitute the volume engage in debating issues arising from these. As the word 'debate' indicates, feminists do not by any means speak univocally, and indeed the editors offer these as "contentious concepts," and privilege the plurality, open-endedness and flexibility that such a state of affairs marks in the domain of feminist inquiry. What makes theorizing, as much as any kind of generalizability, difficult for conscientious feminist theory, is the responsiveness to the claims of specific and contingent events, the attention to individual experience, and the respect for marginal and minority groups that are written into feminist ethics and politics as a consequence of the women's movement and allied political struggles. Many of the essays here are built around, or actually arise from, situations of crisis, and they gain their point and edge by engagement with such historically specific "moments". What this means is that feminist work is invariably reactive, that it is given to manoeuvreing and compromise, and that, above all, its relationship to *contradiction*, as a feature of theory, is one of daring confrontation.

Feminist theory is not easy to do, or at least should not be, if only because of these constraints of "reality"—which are also, of course, the conditions of its possibility. But feminism is concerned, beyond the understanding and interpretation of reality, with the questions of restructuring it and the means of such restructuring: and it is in these differences of vision and politics that conflicts arise. Even while engaging the terms of traditional political philosophy in sustained ways, the essays in this collection enact the more intimate quarrels among feminists in the field. Broadly, the differences reflected in this collection are between the liberal and radical feminist positions. The first forces us to ask whether the limits of liberalism's accommodation of "other" groups—women, minorities, the physically and economically disadvantaged—have been reached; if not, how may we exploit the still available spaces, and if so, what lies beyond? The second, comprehensively attacking patriarchy in the institutions of state and civil society, and advocating separatism and the embrace of radical alterity, is theoretically more challenging, but its purchase on political alternatives would seem to be weak. I would prefer to view this situation of conflict as an aspect of historical transitional ferment, and not necessarily celebrate it as terminal "pluralism" (as the editors are inclined to do!). My discussion of the essays will, I hope, clarify these quickly-made observations.

The first essay, Elizabeth Kiss's "Alchemy or Fool's Gold? Assessing Feminist Doubts about Rights," is a comprehensive and vigorous argument in favour of viewing rights as "alchemy," a term borrowed from Patricia Williams to indicate the potential of rights and rights struggles for effecting transformative social change. The doubts that Kiss addresses are, strictly speaking, *post*-feminist rather than feminist, arising from a number of contemporary realities in advanced western societies: disenchantment with what rights have (not) achieved for women: the alienation and backlash from family, community, workplace, legal judgements, and public opinion as a perceived consequence of rights struggles (and triumphs); the objections to female individualism and the atomism of the rights-bearing individual (woman); the rediscovery of family values and roles for women. It is important to be reminded, and Kiss reminds us, of what rights struggles in the past have won for women as for other oppressed groups in terms of dignity, equality and advancement, and what still remains to be righted in their condition, if only in other parts of the world. But even if we give rights their past due,

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what of the future of feminist political struggles, and how far should they focus on gaining (more) rights? Kiss answers the questions at both the conceptual and strategic levels.

Consequently, the objection that rights act as "boundaries" between individuals is countered by recognizing that, on the contrary, rights connect people by setting up mutual obligations among them. They "define rather than simply deny relationships," as Kiss puts it. The rights of wives against coerced marital sex, for example, does not destroy marriage, it provides a basis for making it better. But it is true that rights are most empowering for those who are socially the most vulnerable. She then grants the moral persuasiveness of an ethics "beyond justice,"—another feminist retort to "mere" rights, seeking to propagate instead the values of care, sacrifice, trust and community—but sees in them no real conflict with but instead only an extension of the moral dimension of justice.

It is Kiss's discussion of the objections that rights encounter at the strategic level that resonate more loudly with feminist predicaments in India. We are familiar with many of these: the distrust of the state as a guarantor of rights, and indeed as a major violator of them; the limitations—very nearly the mockery—of merely formal legal equality; the tendency of rights strategies to concentrate on the ex-post facto redressal of rights violations rather than their prevention; the negative effects of rights (surveillance by the state, for example); and the dilemma of competing rights. But granting the limits and even dangers of rights struggles, logically need these curtail the value of rights? The conclusion that they lead us to must be a different one: that rights struggles can never be narrowly defined or engaged in—they require, as they effect, broader processes of social transformation.

The concerns of the next two essays, Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon's "Decoding 'Dependency': Inscriptions of Power in a Keyword of the US Welfare State," and Uma Narayan's "Towards a Feminist Vision of Citizenship: Rethinking the Implications of Dignity, Political Participation, and Nationality," are made evident in their titles (mini-essays in themselves!). They explore the terrain of gendered citizenship in the framework of the dependency/independence dichotomy: Fraser and Gordon in this justly-famous piece (reprinted from *Signs*), deploring the pathologisation of the welfare-dependant, whose "stigmatized icon" in the United States has now become the poor Black unmarried teenage mother, and Narayan putting forward the claims of the *non-citizen* i.e., the immigrant worker, frequently female, to the full benefits of citizenship. Both carry their radical critique of ideologies of citizenship to counter the state's neglect of or at best condescension towards the "dependent" citizen—poor, female, immigrant, handicapped, minority—by invoking the vocabulary of rights. The state's obligations, when re-written as the individual's rights, as here, become more compelling and binding.

The editors group the next four essays in the volume together as representing critiques of the public-private dichotomy. It was feminism of course that articulated the powerful slogan "the personal is the politicial," thereby transgressing traditional "privacy" norms, inviting scrutiny of the politics of the family, naming violence within the home, and marking the complicities between the patriarchies of family, community, and state. In "The Jurispolitics of Privacy," Anita L. Allen asks whether in the United States the legal right to privacy has been progressive or reactionary where women are concerned. It was instrumental both in women's access to abortion rights (in the landmark *Roe vs. Wade*), as well as in the denial of public funding for abortion (in subsequent cases), an instance of the double valence of (certain) rights for women. On balance, however, Allen considers privacy a valuable right, with potential for prevention of and redressal against sexual harassment, for instance. Allen's is an uneasy argument, one that cedes too much to *interpretation* of law rather than its conceptual ground. All the same, feminist political thinking cannot ignore the fact, both liberatory and constricting, that laws are social practices, and that the terrain of law is one of contested meanings; Allen's essay is an instance of this complexity.

Martha Minow and Mary Shanley's "Revisioning the Family: Relational Rights and Responsibilities," more directly addresses the enormously vexed question of the family both in its relationship to the individual, especially the female individual (whose position in the family is far from symmetrical to the male's), and in its relationship to the state. In the first case, one of the gains of the feminist movement has been to seek the intervention of the state and its laws into the private sphere, especially to respond to violence against women and to assure women's sexual autonomy; in the second, the family as a "unitary entity" has opposed the intrusion of the state, defining itself instead in terms of "community" norms (tradition, custom, religion). Arguing that both these "contract-based" and "community-based" theories of family are inadequate, Minow and Shanley propose a "rights-based" theory that will be attentive to relationships and responsibilities within the family and between families and the "outside" community. Here's a classic resolution that is unexceptionably mediatory. But in the face of the very real conflict between individual rights and family responsibilities, whether such reconciliation will be easy or even possible to bring about by instituting just and proper laws is doubtful—and indeed Minow and Shanley are vague about these mechanisms, gesturing towards "larger political and legal processes" that are needed for family laws to be made to work. An ethics of care certainly needs to be discussed, advocated, and propagated, but how would its translation into rights and obligations avoid the language of law? You cannot force people to be good by law, after all—only prevent them from and punish them for being bad! This essay, like several others in the volume, allows us to situate feminism historically since it exemplifies the evolution of certain "hard" feminist positions, into "softer," more ambivalent versions under oppositional pressure and in response to social change.

The two succeeding essays, Jean Bethke Elshtain's "Political Children: Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Distinction between Public and Private Life," and Elizabeth V. Spelman's "The Heady Political Life of Compassion", are both serious and productive engagements with Arendt's provocative position, in *The Human Condition* and elsewhere, that political life must be confined to the public sphere, and that the family must remain a haven of "privacy," especially for children's nurturance. It is in response to her outrage at Black children's being placed at the forefront of the US government's school desegregation programme in the 1950s (notably in Little Rock), that Elshtain offers the sensible retort that such children are *already* and inescapably "politicized" by their historical circumstances. Those in India who are roused to easy and sentimental indignation at child labourers' protests and unionization, may find pause in Elshtain's support of adult-led children's activism: "You think taking children on protests is shameful? No, it is shame that drives them to protest." But Elshtain's advocacy of family and community values is well known, and ultimately she is sympathetic to Arendt's feelings about protecting childhood, introducing only a distinction between "bad" politics (state or political parties' indoctrination of children) and "good" politics (children included in their community's struggles), as a nuance into Arendt's essays. Elshtain's arguments are conducted on the grounds of rights of families, and are based on psychological reasoning, rather than indicative of the politics of political struggle itself—therefore I find her essay problematic in its reasoning, even when I am in agreement with its conclusion.

Spelman engages the question of the political meaning of "compassion" by reading Harriet Jacobs' nineteenth-century slave autobiography against the grain of Hannah Arendt's insistence that compassion for their people's sufferings is too reactive and spontaneous to provoke "public" discussion based on reason, and is therefore inappropriate as a discourse of politics. Jacobs, under the pseudonym Linda Brent, wrote *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*, which vividly describes the sufferings of slave people to Northern American white readers, especially women, with the explicit purpose of urging the abolition of slavery.

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Spelman demonstrates Jacobs' successes in the text—her conscious use of affect, her skill in narrative, her control of readers' responses, and her retention of moral stature despite being a "victim". Spelman does not consider that Jacobs may well have viewed the slave protagonist as *tragic*—and that in tragedy you do not apologize for suffering but grow heroic on it.

The essay concludes with the "current controversies" over compassion and politics. Referring to Fraser and Gordon's discussion of the trivialization of welfare recipients, Spelman worries about the implications of "victimolatry" for women's self-representation, and presses the need for a feminist care ethics that is linked to a theory of justice. This anxiety over compassion—its degree, its kind (demeaning pity, indifferent condescension, "correct" compassion), its uses in political life—would be curious, even inexplicable, if we did not have hints in this section about the pressures exerted by the economics of the right on American liberals (derisively known as "bleeding heart" after all!)

We come to the last four essays in the volume, which are concerned with the value and means of "empowerment" for women. The first two of these, Anna Yeatman's "Feminism and Power", and Martha Acklesburg's "Rethinking Anarchism/Rethinking Power: A Contemporary Feminist Perspective", pose the question abstractly for feminism. Both conclude that feminism cannot abjure power without cost. Yeatman indeed feels women must attain agential stature i.e. disidentify themselves as perennial "victims", by recognizing their capacity for, even, violence. Recent Indian feminist thought, especially on the left—faced with the rise of militant women leaders in communal parties—has been seriously engaged in countering precisely this valorization of "empowerment" for women in an empty sense. Acklesburg's discussion of questions of power juxtaposes feminism with anarchism (Gandhianism would be a form of anarchic politics in this sense): both have a tendency to oppose authoritarian, hierarchichal structures of power "outside", and within their organizations. But unlike anarchism, feminism, she feels, cannot wish to eliminate the state since it seeks, instead, to hold the state *accountable* to its citizens. In many contemporary political struggles, the nature of resistance is inevitably local and fragmented, but these "anarchist" strategies, she feels, will form the basis for "new, more mutualist, expressions of power." This is a specifically post-modern recuperation of politics, and typically it stresses the shaping of (participants') identity in the *process* of movements for change, rather than the outcome of such struggle.

The last two essays deal with power more obliquely, but are grounded more firmly—both in the experience of violence against women. The arguments they offer are too complex to be easily summarized, so I shall offer only their conclusions. Kimberle Crenshaw's "Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Learning from Violence against Women of Colour," looks at the difficulties Black women experience, from both their own communities and the organized women's movement offering shelters, legal counselling etc., in naming domestic violence and getting redressal for them. In the face of women's multiple identities (poor, Black, women, and so on), and consequently their divided loyalties, Crenshaw offers the concept of "intersectionality" as a way of "saving" the categories (race, class, gender, sexual preference, community etc.), as well as a politics based on belonging to these categories. For minority women this would offer "the courage to challenge groups that are, after all, in one sense, 'home' to us, in the name of parts of us that are not made at home." Crenshaw's advice about generating a feminist politics *within* communities is one that we might wish to think about in India, where communalism severely restricts the scope of feminism from "outside".

Nancy J. Hirschmann marks the limits of concepts of "negative" and "positive" liberties, and choice, when tested from the perspective of battered women who often end up staying with or returning to abusive husbands. Hirschmann's argument is a radical critique of western philosophical positions on "freedom". But even when feminist critique extends the traditional realm of "negative liberties" well beyond the economic compulsions that force women to remain in abusive relationships, in order to include their internal conditioning towards dependency, dutifulness etc., it must, she insists, still retain "some essential features of positive liberty." Battered women, as the subjects of this "system of control," must be persuaded that they have the power to change it—indeed, "in a final sense, *only* battered women can change it." And yet because of "the trauma of violence," a battered woman may not be able to act. The circle can be very vicious. What can function as therapy for such women is the strength that alternative structures, here feminist communities in shelters, can offer them. The beginning is a shift in perspectives on/of freedom. Women's problematic "agency" in committing sati, female foeticide etc. can similarly be viewed, I suggest, in the framework of a problematized notion of "freedom," which will lead not only to more complex understanding of their predicament, but also emphasize the need to create structures of support, ideally in feminist communities.

The major differences on three key areas—equality (more of it? or the limits of it?), difference (heterogeneity? or "strategic essentialism"?), and separate spheres (acknowledgement? or refusal?)—which we can identify in this collection of essays represent not only conflicts in feminism, but also *contradictions* in its theor(ies). As I pointed out at the start, this embrace of contradiction is significantly and constitutively feminist, and I want to conclude with its implications. On the one hand feminism seeks to bring the concepts themselves to crisis, largely, as here, drawing upon post-structuralist resources—by deconstructing their traditional binary formulations, questioning their "origins" and historicizing their provenance, marking their limits, enhancing their "supplements." On the other hand, feminists must retain these (deconstructed) concepts to build the necessary strategies—such as consciousness-raising, mobilization, identity politics, coalitions, state-sponsored welfare, legal reform—for a transformative politics. Politically, negotiation with contradiction can look like reconciliation, mere reactiveness, or pragmatism. Theoretically, it can lead to a reckless abandonment of consistency and correctness, or (postmodern) abandon. The essays in this volume exemplify more rigorously difficult positions, where contradiction in a sense transcends that condition—and hence offers the possibility of a conceptual breakthrough for an autonomous "feminist theory."

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Feminine Economies

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Judith Still

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Manchester University Press, December 1997

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A Question of Culture?
Theorizing Genders and Nations

Mary E. John

GENDER AND NATION

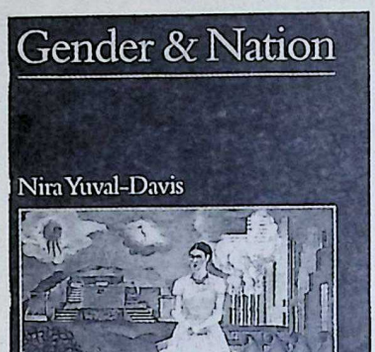
By Nira Yuval-Davis

Sage Publications, 1997, pp. 157, U.K. Price £35 (hardback), £12.95 (paperback)

DISLOCATING CULTURES: IDENTITIES, TRADITIONS, AND THIRD WORLD FEMINISM

By Uma Narayan

Routledge, 1997, pp. 226, Special Indian Price: Rs. 474.00 (paperback)



One of the more fortuitous aspects of globalization, it would seem, is that publishers in the West are displaying a growing interest in marketing their academic books in Third World countries such as ours. Gender studies is among those international fields being promoted particularly vigorously with an eye to a potentially receptive Indian audience. It is also true, however, that both of the books under review—Nira Yuval-Davis' *Gender and Nation*, and Uma Narayan's *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*—stretch across themes that spill beyond the confines of the women's movement and gender studies.

Differing widely in methodology, scope and emphasis, these somewhat slim volumes nevertheless overlap in interesting ways: Both Yuval-Davis and Narayan wish to focus attention on—and also to criticize—the manner in which "culture" has assumed a certain pre-eminence in current approaches to the socio-political relations that shape nations, national identities and women. Where Yuval-Davis offers a broad overview of the different issues involved (drawing especially, but by no means exclusively, from her work in Israel and Britain), Narayan's study is a much more specific analysis of the predicaments facing a Third World feminist of Indian origin living in the United States.

That I learnt considerably more from Yuval-Davis' account may have something to do with my greater familiarity with the world Narayan describes. But this cannot be a complete explanation. Given the self-consciousness with which Narayan discusses the complex and uneven "travelling" of feminist issues across national boundaries, it was disappointing to discover that she is really only addressing a western reader (and that, too, in a rather limited way). Narayan has not thought seriously at all about feminists in India (or in other Third World contexts). Yuval-Davis' book, despite its simpler structure, manages to address a larger, more diverse readership.

Nira Yuval-Davis' *Gender and Nation* consists of six chapters. It begins with an introduction summarizing some of the major feminist debates around the category of gender, as well as mainstream theories of nations and states. Subsequent chapters analyse their interrelationships under the following heads: women and the biological reproduction of the nation; cultural reproduction and gender; citizenship and difference; with a discussion of the possibilities and limits of international feminist politics today.

The list of chapter titles would seem to indicate that questions of "culture" are confined to only one of them, but this is a little misleading. Yuval-Davis aims to join the ranks of those who are resisting "the colonization of the social by the cultural" (p. 66). But she also acknowledges the range of issues that are connected to the theme of culture: the cultural construction of identities and communities; cultural diversity and change; cultural conflict and contestation; the related categories of religion, ethnicity and race; the problems of assimilation, multi-culturalism and hybridization, and the deeply gendered nature of all of these. The chapter on cultural reproduction and gender is a particularly valuable one because it offers a more nuanced analysis of the now quite well-worn theme of women's unique role as markers and reproducers in national narratives and the politics of boundary management—both within and across nation-states. She points to a number of flaws in the widespread arguments that promote "multiculturalism" as the most progressive anti-racist (and, I am tempted to add, anti-communal) strategy available today. These arguments assume implicitly that "all members of a specific cultural collectivity are equally committed to that culture"; moreover, these members must also be "as distinct as possible (within the boundaries of multi-culturalism) from the majority culture in order to be able to be 'different': the more traditional and distanced from the majority culture the voice of the 'community representative' is, the more authentic it would be perceived to be. . ." (p. 57). Yuval-Davis argues persuasively against these and other pitfalls of culturalist identity politics.

Yuval-Davis' attempts at deflecting attention from an overdetermining emphasis on culture in her other chapters meet with mixed success. In my view, the chapter on women and the biological reproduction of the nation, which relies on the fact that women are uniquely biologically responsible for child-bearing in order to make its case, is fully suffused by "cultural stuff". Questions of blood and belonging, arguments for increasing or reducing populations, and the related discourses of eugenics and Malthusianism are hardly "biological" issues, not even in the West and certainly not elsewhere. Even the more liberal versions of population control which today focus exclusively on women, have distinctly cultural overtones about purity and the policing of communities. Her chapter on citizenship, on the other hand, works better in terms of introducing the distinctive orientations of political theory and the problem of rights, so as to enrich and transform the earlier discussions of culture, community and national identity. Having argued that multi-cultural policies effectively contain minority groups through a simultaneous process of exclusion and inclusion, and by locating them in marginal spaces and secondary markets, Yuval-Davis urges that citizenship rights be redefined as "social rights" (rather than cultural or community rights). Rights for the most disenfranchised are meaningless when defined as "choices" or "liberties", "without the enabling conditions through which they could be realised" (p. 87). Rather than look to identity politics for combatting collective disadvantages and discrimination (which has also invited backlashes), she would prefer that we develop strategies to directly confront the disabling conditions which disproportionately affect minority groups.

Gender and Nation is a loosely organized book weaving between general discussions and specific examples. Uma Narayan's *Dislocating Cultures*, to which I shall now turn, is structured quite differently. It is made up of five semi-independent essays held together by the running themes of national identity and feminism. Like Yuval-Davis, Narayan's concern is to contest and complicate the category of "culture", a theme she returns to over and over again, from different vantage points.

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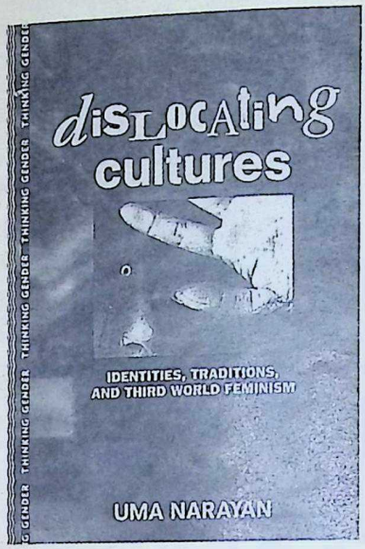

Chapter one discusses the reasons behind the charge of westernization and inauthenticity levelled specifically against Third World feminists; chapter two examines contrasting representations of *sati* in the West and in India; chapter three compares Indian dowry-murders with domestic violence in the United States; chapter four reflects on the problematic roles commonly assigned to intellectuals from Third World backgrounds in multi-cultural U.S. academic contexts; and the concluding chapter, entitled "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food" uses "curry" to explore colonial history and contemporary multi-culturalism.

Several chapters link the colonial agendas of nineteenth century India with contemporary problems at the interface between "Third World feminism" and "the West". The introductory chapter, for example, draws on Partha Chatterjee's seminal discussion of "the nationalist resolution of the women's question" to reveal the selectivity by which the sphere of the middle class upper-caste woman—that of the home—was recast as the privileged site for the construction of a "spiritual" national culture against the materialist West of the colonizer. As the ongoing "bearers of tradition", middle class feminists today are therefore still accused of betrayal and inauthenticity since their feminism becomes equated with westernization. Narayan's response to this problematic is to emphasize the invisibility of numerous other kinds of change within the so-called domain of tradition; moreover, "critical postures do not necessarily render one an 'outsider' to what one criticizes" (p. 33). But this does not imply that national political contexts can be sidestepped:

> At this historical juncture, I believe that any feminism that simply dismisses the idea of 'Nation' and the discourses of Nationalisms as 'patriarchal constructs' will only contribute to their remaining dangerously so, marginalizing progressive and feminist voices whose critical political interventions into the discourses of nationalism is increasingly crucial. In addition, for many Third-World feminists, failing to intervene in these discourses of Nation and nationalism is also to undercut our political agency and legitimacy within these national contexts, and to accede to our dismissal as 'inauthentic' cultural Quislings whose politics constitutes a betrayal of 'our' Nation and Culture (p. 37–38).

With the help of other examples, such as the debate over *sati* and common representations of dowry-murders in U.S. contexts (including academic ones), Narayan drives home the point that "culture" is not just what Indian women are said to embody: More invidiously, culture becomes so inflated as to turn into a sufficient *explanation* of Third World contexts and women's victimization within them. The very different phenomena of *sati* and dowry-killings are commonly run together to emerge as composite or equivalent "deaths by culture", and not only in "ignorant" views that one might easily dismiss. By way of contrast, she shows that "American culture" would not be analogously invoked to account for women's oppression there.

Narayan is therefore keen to undermine such explanations (which, moreover, also replicate the colonialist stances of the past), while looking for alternate accounts, based on a historically informed understanding of the changing modern contexts of countries such as ours. In the chapter on dowry-deaths, Narayan substitutes an economic explanation in place of one drawing on "Hindu religion". Even though this corresponds broadly with debates and accounts in the Indian women's movement, there is something a little reductive in her proposition that dowry-murders are "the killing of women for outright economic gain" (p. 111). More interesting, at least for an Indian reader, is her discovery of how differently problems of domestic violence have been approached in the U.S. context: so much so, that the question of the number of American women actually killed as the result of such violence is something of a non-issue, about which no ready data is available. And yet, on the basis of the information she was able to obtain, it would appear that a roughly similar proportion of women in the U.S. are victims of "domestic-violence murder" compared to Indian statistics on dowry deaths.

These rare insights apart, the overall impression conveyed by Narayan's book is that of a rush job undertaken on unfamiliar terrain. Her citations of Indian feminists are few, and rely very selectively and almost exclusively on work already available in the U.S.; the conceptual issues raised by the thematic of culture are partial, and completely leave out major critiques by ethnographers and postcolonial feminists. There are few signs that any extensive research was undertaken in India—the issues she discusses are from the 1980s. My criticism is not that she should be up-to-date with the problems and impasses (many of them cultural) that beset the women's movement in India today, but that her coverage of older debates fails to generate any new questions.

The concluding chapter on food and curry is the most surprising of all. Having done so much in all the prior essays to dismantle the received commonsense about nations, cultures and genders, this chapter actually ends with a defense of multi-cultural food festivals and eating out in ethnic restaurants for what "we" can thus appreciate about "others". Though the history of the colonial making of "curry powder" is discussed, and Narayan's repugnance of her vegetarian (presumably Brahmin) grandmother's attitudes towards beef-eating Untouchables is recorded, the overarching relations of power that have sustained the politics of food in India, from colonialism in the past to communalism and casteism in the present, are effectively trivialized in her account. Instead of the old assimilationist image of the U.S. "melting-pot", which is now being replaced by the more multi-cultural options of a "mixed salad" or a "stir fry", Narayan extols "the metaphoric usefulness of "masalas", those various combinations of assorted spices, each with its own subtle contribution to seasoning the curry of national life" (p. 188).

However divergent the respective histories of different Third World nations now are, concepts of "culture" have been imposed, assumed and contested in all of them. "Explanations by culture" have carried a special authority all over the Third World and not only in India.

Is this the most potent metaphor that one can offer for combatting the complexities of cultural power within and across nations? Somewhat more prosaically, Nira Yuval-Davis concludes her book *Gender and Nation* with a discussion of feminism and internationalism. Yuval-Davis believes that whereas the 1970s were largely a time of non-dialogue between western and Third World feminists, the '80s and '90s have witnessed far-reaching changes across the globe, making for a heightened feminist awareness in a number of nations as well as a greater sensitivity towards difference. In her view,

> specific historical conditions should dictate the form and substance of particular feminist struggles. Co-operation and solidarity among feminists positioned differentially in different societies and in the same society should be informed by these differences. That is what transversal politics is all about (p. 125).

Women and Modernism

Edited by Katy Deepwell

***Women and modernism* in an anthology of new essays on women artists in the twentieth-century. Katy Deepwell introduces the volume with an examination of the developments and methodologies within feminist art history and an outline of the broader connections between the issues raised by the individual essays.**

Manchester University Press, February 1998

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'Transversal politics', a term she first encountered in Italy, seeks to replace the demand for unity and homogeneity with a critical dialogue between different groups who still believe that some kind of solidarity is possible. What the boundaries of such coalitional politics should be cannot be determined in advance. Most of the examples Yuval-Davis provides are confined to First World contexts, even though it is telling that they appear to have been largely initiated by non-white feminists. Dialogue across Third World national contexts, on the other hand, seems to be that much more difficult to promote. One of the exceptions Yuval-Davis briefly discusses is the international network named Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML). Her allusions to some of the debates around secularism in countries such as Egypt and Iran offer glimpses of impasses and problems that might resonate very well with contemporary Indian debates, such as the one on a uniform civil code. But glimpses are all that one has.

Uma Narayan also remarks that comparisons and links are invariably made between Third World contexts and the West; but it is unfortunate that she does not explore this any further. For, however divergent the respective histories of different Third World nations now are, concepts of "culture" have been imposed, assumed and contested in all of them. "Explanations by culture" have carried a special authority all over the Third World and not only in India. They are invoked in order to understand ethnic bloodshed in Sri Lanka, the outlaw violence of Jamaica, even the (bygone?) economic miracles of the NICs and China today. One of the most pressing challenges for Third World feminists is to seek out new ways of addressing a set of cultural predicaments that may not be unique to a single national context.

Globalization now brings us new books from the West such as Narayan's and Yuval-Davis' from which we may have more or less to learn. But what of a more genuinely international traffic, one that also moves between third world cultures?

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An Iconoclast in Search of New Parameters

Shobhana Bhattacharji

REWRITING HISTORY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PANDITA RAMABAI

By Uma Chakravarti

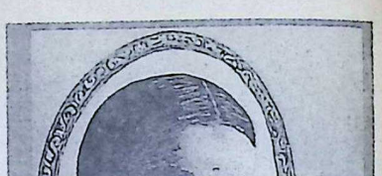
Kali for Women in association with The Book Review Literary Trust, New Delhi, 1998, pp. xiii+370, Rs. 250.00 (hardback).

Good Christian homes used to have books about Pandita Ramabai. Characteristically, these were hagiographic. Something like this: Born in a Chitpavan Brahmana home in 1858, Ramabai saw the light of Christianity and, eight years later on, Jesus himself, after which she was at peace about the divisions in the Church and able to proceed with her work for women.[1] With Jesus on her side, these accounts seem to claim, she received "every encouragement" from prominent social reformers in Poona so that her mission went smoothly (Staffner 155).

This last, Uma Chakravarti has shown in her well documented, tightly written book, was not the case. Ramabai was "the most visible of nineteenth century women in Maharashtra and... the most controversial upper-caste woman of her times" (p. 310). Was she controversial because she was a Brahmana? Was the gender question for a certain class most sharply articulated through an upper-caste widow? Did her caste limit her choices and thus force her to take control of her life? These are some of the questions Chakravarti raises.

But let's start at the beginning. *The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* is in three parts. In the prologue, Chakravarti counterpoints Pandita Ramabai's position in history with Annie Besant's. Besant rides the "high tide of history" whereas Pandita Ramabai is suppressed in mainstream histories even though she got considerable media attention in her time. Why has this happened? Like Jyotiba Phule, the Dalit activist, Pandita Ramabai was an iconoclast in search of new ways of living, initially for high-caste women, especially widows, and later, for women from the poorest and lowest strata. Besant, on the other hand, "established herself as an outstanding revivalist of Hinduism in south India as she held forth on the 'glories' of ancient and modern Hinduism," sneering at the "debilitating" effect of social reformers on society (p. viii). Besant's views could be accommodated within the new nationalist discourse as Pandita Ramabai's could not because she "mounted a scathing critique of Brahmanical patriarchy at a time when even contemporary male reformers were shying away from confronting its structure" (p. ix). Ramabai also threatened "the moral and social order of the kind of nationalism being forged by Hindu nationalists because "as a high-caste Hindu widow herself, she 'chose' to become a Christian, 'betraying' her 'religion' and thereby her 'nation' in the eyes of nineteenth century Hindu society" (p. ix).

Another reason for the difference in the historical accounts of Besant and Ramabai is that from the late nineteenth century till now, "there has been an easy conflation not only of nationalism with Hinduism but more importantly of Christianity with colonialism" (p. ix). There is a latent assumption that in opting for Christianity Ramabai and others had accepted the religion of the rulers and were therefore hand in glove with them. But were colonialism and Christianity synonymous for potential and actual converts? Did people become Christians because they wanted western domination over India? As Chakravarti points out, there has been hardly any analysis of the many facets of Christianity in India, so one cannot assume that those who are Christians were "compradors". In part III of her book, Chakravarti explores the spiritual, intellectual, and social pressures that led Ramabai to Christianity, and she does so with knowledge, wisdom, and sympathy.



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Pandita Ramabai's vigorous, often anguished action against cruelty to women and her search for a spiritual foundation to her life did not happen in an epiphanic blaze. No road-to-Damascus business here. Nor is her courage understandable from smooth hagiographies. Uma Chakravarti starts Ramabai's story in eighteenth century Maharashtra, moving in narrowing circles from the relationship between caste, gender and the Peshwa state, to the changes colonialism brought (Part One), to legal and social changes affecting caste and the formation of class under colonial rule (Part Two), to the life of Ramabai (Part Three).

It begins with the emergence of Chitpavan or Poona Brahmanas as a power group, their disagreements with other Brahmanas and with those who claimed the right to practise rituals which the Brahmanas claimed for themselves, the emergence of this control of ritual itself, and despite all disagreement, the closing of male ranks when it came to surveillance of female sexuality, especially of high-caste women of whom the Chitpavans,

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Ramabai included, were the highest. Fathers and brothers who dared to sympathize with the girls in their family were punished. Some refused to marry daughters off before menstruation. (After menstruation, females were considered dangerous to men so they were married off at the average age of nine.) Others refused to tonsure a widowed daughter or sister. The punishments were swift, inevitable, and unpleasant, and eventually the most zealous reformers complied with the rules—Ramabai's own unconventional father married a nine-year old when he was a widower of forty-four. But the worst punishment (enforced prostitution and slavery, depending on the caste) was reserved for the widows, especially if they were suspected of adultery. Adultery? From a widow? Yes. Because the argument was that a woman married forever.

The "real edge to caste contestations came not with individual castes seeking upward mobility but with a coherent and cogent critique of the caste system itself" from Phule and his associates (p. 64). Phule's criticism was "more emphatically based on exploiting existing social and economic relations," and he "alone, among all nineteenth century reformers, was able to stand outside Brahmanical patriarchy" (p. 65). His handling of the past is therefore different to that of the Brahmanas. Gender was not central to Phule's analysis of caste but because he rejected the caste system, he was able to adopt a more radical approach to gender inequality than his contemporaries. Interestingly, Phule's critical arguments were influenced by Thomas Paine's The Age *of Reason* which helped him and his associates stave off the "attractions" of Christianity (p. 66). But his strongest criticism was based on personal experience as was Ramabai's later.

The tensions within families are among the issues explored in Part Two through accounts of Anandibai Joshi (married at nine), a distant kinswoman of Pandita Ramabai whose graduation from medical school Ramabai attended in America; Ramabai Ranade, "the most 'perfectly schooled' wife" of the famous reformer judge Ranade who has left an account of her life; Durga, judge Ranade's sister (also married at nine), and others. This is followed by a discussion on widowhood—how it was undergone, how it was represented in contemporary writings, and how its material conditions, especially destitution, were challenged in and dealt with by courts of law. It is a complex and largely unhappy story, but fascinating.

And so we come to Ramabai (1858–1922). She was from an unconventional family. Her father, impressed by the way the wife of the last Peshwa Bajirao II learnt Sanskrit, decided to teach it to his wife, too. Sanskrit was then forbidden to Brahmana women. As had happened earlier when he tried to teach his first wife Sanskrit, Anant Shastri came into conflict with family and established Brahmanical authority. He also learnt that what was permitted for the Peshwa's wife was forbidden for other women of the same caste. So he set up an ashram in a forest where Ramabai was born and where she was either taught Sanskrit by her mother (a unique event) or learnt it as it was taught to her brother. Lack of funds forced the family to leave the ashram and they travelled all over India as puraniks, public narrators of the Puranas.

After the experience of his older daughter's marriage, Anant Shastri did not arrange a marriage for Ramabai at the usual age (another unique factor in her life). In fact he did not arrange any marriage for her. After the deaths of her parents and sister, Ramabai and her brother walked "'more than 4000 miles on foot,'" keeping the Brahmanic law and reciting the Puranas but, as Ramabai wrote, "'the gods did not appear to us . . . we began to lose our faith'" (p. 307). It was only when Ramabai's entire family had died that she married a shudra Bengali friend of her brother's under the Civil Marriage Act as neither of them believed in traditional Hinduism.

Ramabai's visit to Calcutta in 1878 was momentous. It was the first, and possibly last, time she was publicly feted. The reformers saw her as a "godsend." They had talked about glorious Indian womanhood, citing Gargi and Maitreyi but they were more than short on contemporary examples. Ramabai, however, was proof that glorious Indian womanhood continued unbroken. Ramabai eventually went beyond their agenda, and that was the start of her marginalisation. Already the media attention had resulted in suspicion about her being unmarried at 22. Perhaps she was dedicated to Krishna as a child. Or maybe she was a "'child'" widow. Such explanations from within the prescribed roles for women gave place to fury with her cross-caste marriage. Study of the Dharmashastras made her question the fundamental propositions of Brahmanic Hinduism just as later a study of the Bible would make her question each of established Christianity's many denominations' claims to being the only true Christianity. None of this was likely to make her everyone's friendly neighbourhood Chitpavan woman.

Widowed two years after her marriage with a daughter to support and destitute like most widows, she returned to Poona, tonsured as per prescription. Then began her work for women, each stage leading to criticism from men and women in her community. She believed that education would help her and that too a medical education in England where she went with her daughter and a companion. She did not become a doctor but she did become a Christian and, with it, a sort of trophy for the missionaries. Her companion committed suicide, something Ramabai found impossible to speak of. The Poona Brahmanas were outraged. Only Jyotiba Phule publicly defended her conversion.

Differences with the Anglican Church made Ramabai turn to the Americans for help. The Ramabai Associations were set up and they helped her with money to set up widows' homes. The first of these was Sharada Sadan, meant specifically for high-caste widows, and its first student was twelve-year old Godubai who later married D.K. Karve. The Poona Brahmanas panicked at rumours that Ramabai was converting "their" women to Christianity. This was not at all true. Nevertheless, Ramabai left oppressive Poona for Kedgaon where she set up Mukti Sadan, an avowedly Christian institution for women of all castes. The Ramabai Associations also defended Ramabai's stand on the status of widows when Swami Vivekanand, in a sort of damage control measure, claimed in his Chicago address that widows were wonderfully treated in India. The controversy was joined by European scholars, with Max Mueller—whom Ramabai had known since Oxford—defending Ramabai's "honesty". The American connection palled because the money came with strings that Ramabai could not accept, and then she turned to Australia.

She seems to have eventually distanced herself from denominational Christianity. After a brief Pentecostal phase, Marathi kirtans composed by the Christian poet Waman Narayan Tilak were sung at Mukti Sadan. In 1905, Ramabai began to translate the Old and New Testaments into a simpler Marathi than the Sanskritized one the Bible Society had used for its translation. She learnt Hebrew and Greek for this. It took her eighteen years during which she also wrote a Marathi Greek grammar (see Staffner p. 166).

Chakravarti has woven Ramabai's story with her personal and social difficulties. There was the reductant support of Ramabai Ranade whose husband instructed her to remain friends with her heretical namesake. And there was the plague controversy that "brought on the wrath of the colonial government and Anglican missionaries" (p. 338). The narrative ends with Chakravarti's concern about what Ramabai's story means for contemporary India, especially because some political issues of her time have been raised again.

Of the many good things about this book are an exhaustive bibliography, efficient appendix (an appendix is a bonus in a Kali for Women book), deliciously long notes at the end of each chapter rather than at the end of the book (footnotes would have been even better), a reasonable price thanks to being subsidized by *The Book Review Literary Trust*, and a marvellous Prem Chowdhry illustration on both dust and hard covers of woman as decorated wife and tonsured widow which fits in superbly with Chakravarti's argument about the conceptualization of women in nineteenth-century Maharashtra.

Best of all, the book is mercifully not written for other historians alone.

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Gender and Imperialism

Edited by Clare Midgley

This book marks an important new intervention into a vibrant area of scholarship, creating a dialogue between the histories of imperialism and of women and gender. By engaging critically with both traditional British imperial history and colonial discourse analysis, the essays demonstrate how feminist historians can play a central role in creating new histories of British imperialism.

Manchester University Press, January 1998

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The Observer and the Observed

Susan Vishvanathan

FREUD, RACE AND GENDER

By Sander L. Gilman

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 296, Rs. 395.00

Freud, Race and Gender by Gilman Sanders is a complex and stressed work bringing together a wide range of secondary materials.

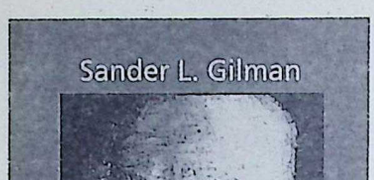
Freud like other Jewish scientists of his time was captive to the dualism of his identity: physician/patient; scientist/Jew; observer/observed. It was in Vienna, where he read the Bible, Shakespeare, studied classics, attended an old University, became scientifically "exact" that Freud's dual identity became crystallized. It also meant, in this very anti-Semitic city being seen as "different, diseased, as culturally incomplete". Gilman says that Freud told the journalist George Sylvester Viereck in 1926, "My language. . . is German, my culture, my attainments are German. I considered myself German intellectually, until I noticed the growth of anti-Semitic prejudices in Germany and German Austria. Since that time, I prefer to call myself a Jew."

The Jews were also identified as Black and as diseased. If not Black, they were seen to be mixed breeds: this, the problamatics of 'passing' appears here as central. This symbolism of racial and cultural conflicts, of genetic memory that war against each other is captured by the author through the writing of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "If my entire internal development and struggles were only the stirrings of my inherited blood . . . against my Germanic and Roman blood, and the responses to these results. . ."

What then became the mark of the Jew? It was circumcision. Gilman uses circumcision as a cultural index in order to understand how Freud's work appeared as a consequence of the debates of the time. Freud officially rejected the relationship between psychoanalyses and Jewishness. "My background as a Jew helped me to stand being criticized, being isolated, working alone. All this was of help to me in discovering analysis. But that psychoanalysis itself is a Jewish product seems to be nonsense. As a scientific work, it is neither Jewish nor Catholic, nor Gentile. . ." It is this self-proclaimed position that Gilman contests in his very scholarly work.

Penis envy, one of those odd cultural constructs imposed on women by a masculinist western imagination becomes the crux of the text. The clitoris as the 'truncated penis' became the symbol of the circumcised Jew. The Jew was a 'woman'. The inferiority of the woman and the inferiority of the Jew were homologous—they were the chosen victims of disease and madness. 'Small' as the symbolic statement of inferiority was applied to both: sanitation and the "corruption" of the body went together. Yet women were relocated as the 'included Other'. (The Jew was the 'excluded Other'.) Woman was, when successful, according to Freud, narcissistic, idealized by society, desired, beautiful—she was not simply a substitute for the Jew.

However, while Gilman located Freud's violent treatment of women as biographically located within his own implicit inferiority as a Jew, he does not offer a humane reading of Freud. It is as dissectionist as Freud's work itself where there is no laughter or compassion, only objective science and/or cruel jokes. One misses the re-reading of Jewishness by Martin Buber where Hasidic jokes were a storehouse of wisdom, where social, national and regional languages interwove.



In a learned discussion on the history of circumcision Gilman locates the cultural place of the Jew in the West. "Circumcision is associated with powerlessness and disease." This was the origin of anti-Semitism where circumcision, castration and the Jew became linked associatively. To this combination of powerlessness and disease came the epithet of madness—the substance of Gilman's third and final chapter.

In this long essay he looks at the politicisation of madness which had to do with the 'inferiority' of race and gender. Not only, Gilman says, were Jewish practices seen to be a symbol of madness, they were seen to lead to madness. Not surprisingly from feminisation (circumcision, castration) to madness and to homosexuality is a minor associative leap. Gilman analyses Freud's work on homosexuality as "fixation at an earlier stage of development" and then shows that the assertion of excessive sexuality and homosexuality and its consequent anti-Semitism were substantially recorded by Freud and the psychoanalysts of that time. From homosexuality Gilman analyses the anus, scatological tracts, the Jewish "preoccupation" with constipation and haemorrhoids and on to syphilis.

The conclusion is titled "Systemic diseases: Cancer and anti-Semitism" and subtitled "Whose cancer is it anyway? Freud's male body as the locus of disease."

This is an excellent piece of writing which looks at anti-Semitism, degeneration and cancer using Freud's love for tobacco and his corrosive buccal tumours.

"By the end of the summer of 1923, after returning from a trip to Italy during which he had been in intense pain and had had a profuse haemorrhage, Freud was informed of what he had already guessed: the tumour was cancerous. In October 1923 Freud underwent two major operations to remove the cancer, which was then definitely diagnosed as squamous cell cancer, often found in cancers of the mouth. From 1923 to 1938 Freud underwent thirty seven procedures at the hands of Pichler, many intended to adjust the prostheses that Pichlet had made for him. Both Freud's speech and his hearing were affected to a limited extent. He avoided public appearances where he had to speak and was often represented at these by his daughter Anna.

"During the 1930s it seemed that he was in constant discomfort, if not outright pain, from his prostheses as well as from the effects of the surgery. By the fall of 1938, in Freud's new home in Hampstead, Max Schur, his internist noticed a further lesion, which proved to be cancerous. Treated with radium, this final recurrence brought the aged Freud to the point where he requested Schur to administer morphine to him, and he quietly died on the night of September 23, 1939."

However, while Gilman located Freud's violent treatment of women as biographically located within his own implicit inferiority as a Jew, he does not offer a humane reading of Freud. It is as dissectionist as Freud's work itself where there is no laughter or compassion, only objective science and/or cruel jokes. One misses the re-reading of Jewishness by Martin Buber where Hasidic jokes were a storehouse of wisdom, where social, national and regional languages interwove. The grammar of medical reports, the violence of statistics appears very starkly in Gilman's analyses. There is another side—laughter, love, humanness, survival—captured perhaps in acerbic biographies of Jews like Simone Weil, or middle class fantasies such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, or the tragic *The Diary of Anne Frank* or the magical *Treblinka*. Shame and self-consciousness are forced upon people—by themselves people are quite happy with what they are. It is only when that particular gaze—contempt, patronage, pity, hate, lust—disrupt the even tenor of one's own identity that one understands that one is woman, Jew, Dalit, Black and these are apparently not good things to be. Why ever not?

I remember when I was thirteen, and particularly rebellious, my father—a man of few words, great intelligence and an evil temper—gave me a book called *The Emotional Problems of Living*. I struggled with it—it was a '50s style psychology book and to my utter con-

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sternation I discovered for the first time, the term 'penis envy'. I was aghast. Like most middle class Syrian Christian girls I had never imagined such a thing. We didn't live in a village and there were no naked children about. There were no new babies among the middle aged people who were my parents' friends—they had chastely covered children and our parents led a very sequestered undemonstrative conjugal life. There was no cable. *Gone with the Wind* communicated that passionate kisses and series of lovers existed but nobody *mentioned* penii. I hadn't yet got to Mrs George's Health Science Class in school where she drew concentric circles and cylinders double-lined like contour islands to depict reproductive organs—you had to be fifteen to draw those. Why *would* I have penis-envy? We hoped to grow up soon ourselves and be like our mothers.

Feminist friends in America who are in their '50s now tell me how they hated their mother and she hated them, and how they adored their father. I feel totally surprised. Like penis envy, mother-rivalling sounds a useless sort of thing. Of course it might happen—but it needn't happen every time, or to everyone, or everywhere.

It is difficult to critique this book for psychoanalysing Freud—after all Malinowski provided the most substantial sociological critique by saying that matrilineal societies are not Oedipal. In the same vein I would re-read Freud's letters to Lou Andreas Salome, which I found in the JNU library, probably bought at a time when UGC funds provided grants for buying new books! The letters between Freud and Lou are so charming—letters between a man and a woman, not necessarily 'Jew' and 'Woman'. The most interesting critique of Freud remains for me Virginia Woolf's novels. If Gilman uses a method to deconstruct a method its tautological to say the least, and reconfirms the method rather than critique it. Virginia Woolf writes inspite of being hemmed in by id, ego and super-ego—that is a true victory which transcends the methodology, the definition of what is normal and pathological. The sea waves of consciousness and immortality are finally fused, and like Freud's death, we have to be non-judgemental about Virginia's.

Gilman's book is clearly a complex, multi-faceted work, built layer by layer: as an exegetical work it will bring socio-biologists, psychoanalysts, historians and anthropologists together.

Susan Visvanathan teaches Culture and Gender Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Alternate Healing Practices

Rama Baru

TOUCH ME, TOUCH ME NOT: WOMEN, PLANTS AND HEALING

By Shodhini

Kali for Women, 1997, New Delhi, pp. 222, Rs. 150.00

There have been few studies which have looked at the role of women as health care providers both in the family and the community. Before allopathic medicine gained prominence women played a central role in caring for the sick by administering herbal medicines, home remedies, dietary changes and providing emotional support. With the consolidation of allopathic medicine many of these practices are gradually disappearing in the developed and developing countries. Over the last few decades several women's groups have been concerned about medicalization of their health problems and in order to counter the all powerful medical establishment they have actively tried to promote alternate systems of healing. Both in the West and in India, women activists have tried to document alternate healing practices, which is fast fading from people's knowledge. The book under review, which is a product of a collective effort of a network of women's health activists, documents the intimate relationship between women, plants and healing from different parts of India.

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The idea behind this network was to systematically research and document the traditional knowledge of plants used for healing by women from different parts of the country. This was used as the scientific basis for an alternate approach to dealing with women's health problems. By organizing self help groups with women, a range of issues concerning their health and traditional practices were discussed which provides insights into the rich empirical knowledge that women use to treat a variety of ailments. After listing the various herbs and plants for healing, they proceeded to systematically test it for its effectiveness. The presentation of this information makes it a rich source book of medicinal plants which can be used for treating ailments. Each of the common medicinal plants is described in terms of its botanical name, where it is found, the parts which are to be used, the healing properties it has, the symptoms for which it is to be used and how it is to be prepared. Most of the plants that have been listed are commonly available in rural and urban areas in the country. The last section of the book presents an interesting discussion of the debates surrounding the self help approach and its relevance to the Indian context. The efforts of Shodhini highlights the possibility of empowering women to deal with their health problems by reviving and strengthening traditional knowledge. However there are limits to alternate systems of healing and there needs to be a debate among activists specially at a time when privatization of health services is being advocated. With the withdrawal of the state from health care provisioning the responsibility is being shifted to the household and the community. Will this result in greater empowerment or increase women's burden? Its a dilemma which most activist groups face and for which there is no simple answer.

Rama Baru teaches at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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designed and directed by S R MOHNOT

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The Empire on Borrowed Time

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

TOWARDS FREEDOM: DOCUMENTS ON THE MOVEMENT FOR INDEPENDENCE IN INDIA 1943–1944

Edited by Partha Sarathi Gupta

Indian Council for Historical Research, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1977, Parts I, II, III, pp. clviii+3516, Rs. 7500.00

Documentation is to historiography what brick-making is to architecture. It is always labour intensive, often messy, and sometimes a trifle tedious. Historians who take on such a task earn our gratitude. They select and print and make accessible to the non-specialists documents to which none but the professional historians and researchers would have access. The editor Professor Partha Sarathi Gupta and the General Editor, S. Gopal, merit our grateful thanks for having accomplished this task. Gupta is the first to complete the work, out of a dozen or so editors who accepted the responsibility of putting together documents of the decade 1937–1947 in the project entitled Towards Freedom. The project, about a decade old, raised great expectations. The Indian government is reported to have invested in it about three and a half crores through agencies like the Indian Council of Historical Research and the National Archives of India. The output in the form of publications has been awaited so long that the publication of a volume of the projected series is widely regarded as an achievement in itself.

The sheer mass and density of the volume that has been published is very impressive. More than 2,000 documents, spread over 3,500 pages, cover the period 1943–44. I am given to understand that this volume will cost Rs. 7,500. The price is probably beyond the reach of the average college library in India not to speak of the individual buyer. However it will be undoubtedly a valuable acquisition for the buyer, and in the market abroad two hundred dollars is not an exorbitant price. (Is a cheaper edition possible?)

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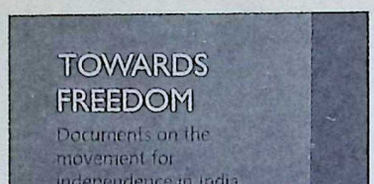
This series will be inevitably compared (by Indiawallahs in England and by historians in India) with a parallel series: The Transfer of Power 1942–1947 documents edited by Nicholas Mansergh. In a sense, the series as originally conceived by the Indian Council of Historical Research, is part of the Indian critique and response to the British effort to document the last days of British rule in India. In terms of its scope Mansergh's project was *ab initio* more limited—something that we often forget. Mansergh's series bore the subtitle 'Constitutional relations between Britain and India': the light thrown on politics in India in the pre-independence quinquennium was incidental to the main theme of the constitutional and political decision-making process in England and within the Government of India as reflected in the India Office records and selected private papers. Prime Minister Harold Wilson stated in the House of Commons in June 1967: "the selection of documents to be published under the new arrangements should be documents from the India Office records on the transfer of power and the events leading up to it."

As distinct from the purpose of the Mansergh series, the series of which Gupta's is the first to be published addresses a much wider range of issues and explores a variety of sources. The General Editor of the series, Dr. S. Gopal, writes in an illuminating 'Preface': "The Towards Freedom volumes . . . bring together historical materials relating to the period 1937–47 from a wide variety of sources—official records, private and organizational papers, newspapers and other contemporary publications—available within the country . . . One common aim of the series has been to avoid an exclusive preoccupation with high politics and they have attempted to present, within the limits set by the sources, documents relating to the activities, attitudes and ideas of the diverse classes and sections of Indian society, all of which contributed to the attainment of Indian independence with partition". Thus the objectives of the two series are different. The first volume in the Indian series compares favourably with the parallel enterprise in Pakistan. In the Pakistani series the range of sources used is much more limited and, the focus is on a briefer period and on a single personality, M.A. Jinnah; it made the task of documentation easier but reduced its value as a source book on the independence movement in the subcontinent.



A few words on the editorial apparatus and format of editorial presentation in the volume under review may be in order. The reader of this gargantuan collection would have benefited from an Index and there is none. A more "reader-friendly" approach would have been to provide indices to 'subjects' and 'personalities', a standard editorial device to help the reader locate the material he wants on the particular subject he is interested in. However, an editorial note tells us that an index was omitted "for the following reasons: the chapters are arranged thematically; at the end of the introduction to each chapter, other documents in other chapters which are also relevant have been listed; finally, a detailed Calendar of Documents with page references is provided" (p. xxxi). For doing without an Index, these reasons are insufficient. If you were interested in knowing which are the documents relating to say the freedom movement in Bihar, the thematic chapterization will not help, nor the sparse reference to other documents following the introduction, and ploughing through more than a hundred pages of the Calendar of Documents will not be easy nor perhaps fruitful.

Secondly, the Calendar of Documents could have been more useful than it is. It tells us who was writing to whom, the date and the title under which the document appears in this volume (and, of course, the source). In this Calendar of Documents what is needed is an indication of the chief subjects on which each document throws light. One of the things which made Mansergh's volume easy to use was a synoptic account of the subject of each document (apart from an Index provided at the end of each volume).

In the absence of a general Index to subjects and personalities, and a summary of the subjects mentioned in a document, this collection is difficult to use. The able coordinating editor, Dr B. Chatterji of the ICHR, might consider the possibility of altering the editorial practice in this regard. Sometimes the citation of source is incomplete: a large number of documents are reproduced from Dr P.N. Chopra's British Secret Documents (1986) and in these the citation of, for example, "F. 28/Cong/42-A-III January 16, 1943" (p. 11) leaves you guessing whether the file belongs to the Government of Bengal or the Government of India series (presumably, in either case, Home Dept., Political Branch). Likewise, documents are reproduced from, for example, "Govt. of Bihar, Freedom Movement Files, File No. 35" (p. 35) without indication of the author, who he is writing to, and the provenance of the file, collected by other hands. More complete citation of sources will be useful in such cases.

A good thing about the editorial organization of the book is the thematic chapterization. Documentation in Chapters I to IV relate to the political developments in the confrontation between the nationalist forces and the imperial government in 1943–44: the counter-measures of the government, censorship, the outcome of legal interventions and struggle in the law courts, and Mahatma Gandhi's role in the turbulence following the Quit India Movement. Chapters V and VI on the Communist Party and the Radical Democratic Party, as well as Chapter XVIII on "communal and Separatist movements" also address the explicit political issues. The interface between the political parties and socio-economic

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groups or strata can be seen in the documents on the movements among the peasantry, industrial working classes, the business community, and the intelligentsia active in the cultural arena (Chapters IX to XIII). The weakening of the imperial structure of administration and subordination of a disaffected subject people can be seen in the chapters on nationalist sympathizers in the civil service (Chapter VII), disaffection in the army and the impact of the Azad Hind Fauj (Chapters XV-XVI). Then there are chapters devoted to the developments in the princely States, and the arena of international politics (Chapters XIX and XVIII). The selection of documents departs from the usual pattern in historiography that focuses on the activities of the political leadership. This is particularly reflected in two chapters on the impact of food scarcity and famine (Chapters VII and XX) and in the chapter on rumours which indicate the state of mind of the common masses in India in the aftermath of the 1942 movement.

The excellent thematic organization of the documents of 1943–44 raises the question whether such a thematic structure would have been a better organizational principle for the projected series. Rather than assigning one volume to each year, would it not have been better to commission thematic volumes, each following in a connected manner the developments right from 1937 to 1947 (the span of time chosen for this documentation series) in respect of major trends, e.g. the communal and separatist movements, the peasant and working class movements, the role of the Left, developments in the Princely States etc. and, of course, 'high politics' of the top national leadership at the point of interface with the decision makers of the imperial system? Such a thematic organization of the series would have allowed the editor of each volume to follow a theme for the entire decade, 1937–47; a purely chronological sequencing of the volumes, the one-volume-per-year pattern, has been adopted by the editors in the projected series for reasons of convenience perhaps—but an alternative pattern on thematic lines could be considered. In the Mansergh series the chronological sequence was acceptable because of its narrow focus on the process of transfer of power. Whether the same pattern is appropriate for the more comprehensive objectives of the *Towards Freedom* series, whether a year-by-year partitioning of responsibility between the editors of each volume is suitable, whether turning on and off documentation at the beginning and the end of each year would not interrupt the inner narrative which strings together the documents—these are important questions concerning the organizing principle of the series as a whole.

This particular volume in the series is admirably organized in terms of the themes outlined above. If there is any single thread holding it all together, it is an emphasis in documentation on the struggle over legitimacy. It is, of course, a commonplace that the legitimacy of the Raj was progressively diminishing. Gupta points to growing "Indian dissatisfaction with imperial rule", a diminution of its "credibility", reflected in the documents (p. xvi). What is more notable is that Gupta argues that in its strategy against the tide of disloyalty "the government gave greater weight to measures justifiable in terms of civil jurisprudence than to plea of military necessity . . . across the racial divide the members of the Bar and the Bench in India often spoke a common language drawing on British, Commonwealth and Indian legal precedents and principles of natural justice" (pp. xix–xx). Thus, the validity of the Defence of India Rule No. 26 concerning detention without trial and Ordinance II of 1942 regarding Special Criminal Courts received a bad mauling in the Courts of law (Document nos. 27, 33 of chapter III). Not only the Federal Court but also the High Courts of Allahabad, Calcutta and Patna witnessed famous debates on the constitutional validity of the DIR and other extraordinary measures. Not only did the legal system provide legal means to the opponents of the regime to question the punitive measures taken by the government, but the Raj allowed itself to be arraigned in the Courts, defended itself as best as it could by the normal judicial processes, and tried to devise legal counter-measures. Legitimacy in terms of legality of action was an objective of the Raj though it lost legitimacy in terms of the subjects' loyalty. And this despite the fact that Viceroy Linlithgow was of the view that "We are at war, the rebellion (1942) was the most formidable uprising since 1857" (Memo of 4 February 1943, Document no. III, 13). There were people like Justice Maurice Gwyer to represent another view of the matter: Though "Courts of law ought to abstain from harsh and ungenerous criticism of acts done in good faith by those who bear the burden and responsibility of government, specially in times of danger and crisis, we are not on that account relieved from the duty of seeing that the executive government does not seek to exercise powers in excess of those which the Legislature has thought fit to confer upon it, however drastic and far-reaching those powers may be and however great the emergency they are designed to meet." (Gwyer, CJ., Talpade v. Emperor, 22 April 1943, Federal Court; Gupta, p. 930).

Thus, Gupta argues, "a space was available for opponents of the regime to question the punitive measures taken by the Raj. The successful use of every weapon in the legal armoury available to the nationalists is one chapter in the history of the freedom movement which required to be recorded" (p. xix). Gupta underlines the endeavour of the government to establish the legality of its authoritarianism, to legitimize authoritarianism by means open under law. At the same time, that the legitimacy in terms of willing compliance of the subject was steadily lost by the government is shown by a mass of documents. The Press was defiantly critical despite censorship, the cultural movements of those times reached a crescendo of anti-imperialist fervour, the popular movements including the peasant and working class movements received an infusion of anti-imperialism not only from the nationalist leadership but also sections of the Left, and among students nationalists "were gaining the upper hand" over the others and founded a strong separate organization outside of the Students Federation (Chapters II, XIII, IX–X, and XI). Documents on disaffection in the Army suggest a deep crisis of loyalty and the psychological impact of the I.N.A., even if little of it was known in India at the time, added up to a very grave threat to the stability of the regime (Chapters XV–XVI). About fifty documents on rumours of various kinds illustrate the state of public mind: rumours of the impending collapse of British rule, of the victories of the Japanese forces, and even the rumour of preparations towards handing over India to the United States of America (Chapter XIV). Gupta points to the defeatist message in the rumours. I recall a faintly a rhyme which went around amongst us in a class of five or six year old pupils at a kindergarten type of school in Calcutta in 1944: "Sa-re-gama-pa-dha-ni/Bomb phelechay Japani. . ." The unknown rhymester who thus began with Do-re-mi, in the Indian scale, grafted on it with infantile relish a "defeatist" message on British dismay at bombing by the Japanese. Legitimacy can be contested in the nursery school as well!

In this massive collection of twenty-three hundred documents one might lose the wood for the trees now and then—and there are indeed, some trivial things included here—but the big picture is clear: the regime's loss of legitimacy. This picture is not startlingly novel. Many works of history or autobiographical writings and memoirs of those times have pointed to this erosion of legitimacy. The value of this work of documentation is that it demonstrates the state the process had reached in 1943–44. The editor's conclusion is cautious: "As the year 1944 drew to an end, the prospects of success for an early end to British rule in India were none too hopeful." And the General Editor, Dr. S. Gopal, writes: "by the end of 1944 the Raj was in a substantially weaker position than it had been in 1939. . . By late 1944, sober British opinion could clearly see that economic and political wisdom lay in negotiating a settlement with nationalist India with the aim of securing India as a friendly partner in the British Commonwealth" (p. xiv).

Historical hindsight imparts to our perception of the process leading to 1947 a sort of inevitability. It is wise to be cautious against it. However, the essence of the process was self-evident even to the contemporary observers. The Empire survived on borrowed time.

Historical hindsight imparts to our perception of the process leading to 1947 a sort of inevitability. It is wise to be cautious against it. However, the essence of the process was self-evident even to the contemporary observers. The Empire survived on borrowed time.

The coercive character of the Colonial State stood exposed from 1942, as the willing compliance of the subject race was progressively withdrawn—what has been called 'loss of legitimacy'. At the same time, a countervailing hegemony is built by the Nationalists—sometimes and in some places actually taking the form of a counter-state or *Pratisarkar*. In the abstract, one can think of it as a dual monopoly model—the colonial State's monopoly of coercion vis-a-vis subjects, facing the nationalist leaders' monopoly of citizens' compliance or obedience. The latter monopoly could be effectively challenged only by communalist separatism. Apart from being thus challenged, nationalist hegemony was perhaps also flawed by the leaders' instrumentalist view of popular movements. Thus the stage was set for the events of 1947 and our times.

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History and His Story

Shambhu Prasad

ON THE SALT MARCH

By Thomas Weber

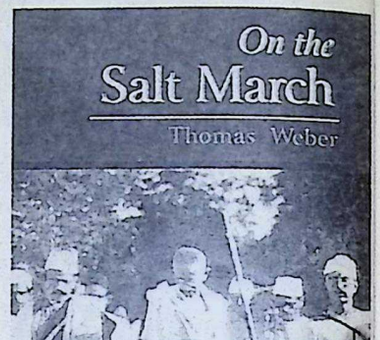
Harper Collins, distributed by Rupa & Co., 1997, pp. 594, Rs. 595.00

There have been few books on Gandhi that have described the actual events in detail, the people and places involved, how he organized the event or how local people perceived it. Thomas Weber has presented through his book *On the Salt March*, a critical break in the way history is seen and written. If Amin in his work on Chauri Chaura, *Event, Metaphor, Memory* stepped outside of the confines of conventional history by looking at how history was seen by the people of Chauri Chaura, Weber goes one step further by actually reenacting the event—the Salt March of 1930. Weber walked the distance of 241 miles that Gandhi did on the same route and at the same time of the year. The result of this experience of "Thomasbhai's March" 53 years after the original one is the substance of the present book. The book is a rare combination of dispassionate academic rigour and sensitive field work that will not only enrich the discipline of political history but also provide a very readable, definitive and comprehensive study on the Dandi March.

The Salt Satyagraha evokes a variety of responses today. The event has its memories and legends that continue to be created every time the story is told. Weber tries to make sense of these diverse legends in an ingenious fashion. He follows up his research from the archives with interviews with 17 of the original eighty marchers, and by visiting all the villages in the route at the same time of the year. As a result, Weber is able to set right some myths about the march, the most famous being the picture of Gandhi picking salt and Sarojini Naidu shouting "Hail Deliverer" after that. Weber points out that the picture was not taken at Dandi but at Bhimrad three days later and shows how a pleasant friendly exchange between Gandhi and Naidu gets constructed as a stirring battle cry.

The true worth of the book is however not in setting right these "errors" but in being able to convey the mood of the time and making the people involved in the march. The villages, the exact location of Gandhi's speeches come alive in the narration. The reader gets to contrast the two marches, Weber's and Gandhi's. Weber does well to narrate both the history of the march and his story without elaborate comments. One notices the incongruities of the latter day march when Weber has to walk in a single file to avoid being run over on the highway, or a smart salesman using the crowd that Weber generates to peddle his goods through a loudspeaker—a far cry from the discipline that the original march engendered. These apart, one is also amazed at people's memories of the event as Weber too is garlanded with hanks of yarn, offered money (which he has to refuse because unlike Gandhi he does not have a cause), Gandhi coins and stamps. Through his march, Weber seems to highlight a way to a people's archive and is able to enthuse villagers to follow the example of Ankhi, the only village in the route that preserved the speech of Gandhi in their village.

Unlike other works on Gandhi that do not give due weightage to Gandhi's religious and social dimensions of the struggle, or the importance to constructive work, Weber highlights these "other messages of Dandi". For Gandhi the March was a pilgrimage. The padayatra, unlike other yatras allows for self-suffering without being sentimental about it. In covering over 200 miles the marchers were to, in Gandhi's words, be "as pure in life as could be found" and were to be the "first sacrificial offering". Gandhi and his marchers had to overcome fatigue several times during the march and yet had to maintain their quota of spinning yarn and writing their personal diaries. It was through impeccable personal example, and not through numbers, that others would get encouraged to carry out civil disobedience. The march was thus "a living sermon on how battles should be fought, on the appearance of the ideal free India, on how villages should be organized in a sanitary and co-operative way". Weber shows how most of Gandhi's speeches in the villages were about these along with references to the salt tax.



Through his march, Weber seems to highlight a way to a people's archive and is able to enthuse villagers to follow the example of Ankhi, the only village in the route that preserved the speech of Gandhi in their village.

The organization of the march is rarely written about but is an interesting study in itself. Behind the march and the marchers were researchers who while carrying out the "Economic Survey of Matar Taluka" were also providing details of the places to be marched to. The Gujarat Vidyapith following the dictum of "learning is that which liberates" ensured the meticulous planning for the route, organized training camps for volunteers before the march. The *Arun Tukdi* (Army of the Dawn) comprised students who formed the advance party organized sanitation for the marchers in the villages. This political march had nothing secretive about it though it too was carried out like an organized army. The Viceroy was warned of it by Gandhi in his letter which included a list of demands.

The marchers themselves were an interesting mix—a weaving teacher, students in the Ashram school, a musician, a Sanskrit scholar who was in charge of the Ashram tannery etc. This

Weber does well to narrate both the history of the march and his story without elaborate comments. One notices the incongruities of the latter day march when Weber has to walk in a single file to avoid being run over on the highway, or a smart salesman using the crowd that Weber generates to peddle his goods through a loudspeaker—a far cry from the discipline that the original march engendered.

I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India to be a curse, I do not, therefore, consider Englishmen in general to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends. Indeed much that I have learnt of the evil of British rule is due to the writings of frank and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the unpalatable truth about that rule.

And why do I regard the British rule as a curse?

It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford.

It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture. And, by the policy of cruel disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually. Lacking the inward strength, we have been reduced, by all but universal disarmament, to a state bordering on cowardly helplessness. . .

It is common cause that, however disorganized and, for the time being, insignificant it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt. Its end is the same as mine. But I am convinced that it cannot bring the desired relief to the dumb millions. And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organized violence of the British Government. Many think that non-violence is not an active force. My experience, limited though it undoubtedly is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well against the organized violent force of the British rule as [against] the unorganized violent force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned. Having an unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer.

Extract from Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy, 2 March 1930

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curious mix of political novices, along with Gandhi were to launch one of the most significant campaigns in India's history. Weber is able to bring out the spirit of some of those who were involved—he meets a Gangabehn Vaidya, a doctor who organized the kitchen in the Satyagraha Ashram then, who continues to spin her daily quota of yarn at the age of 105, a Vinubhai Shah who refused to be included in a photograph of the marchers 25 years after independence as he did not want to be part of political propaganda.

The mood of the times is captured well by Weber through his everyday accounts of the march. There are cases of human ingenuity as villagers make a makeshift bridge out of bullock carts lined up to let the marchers cross a river. During the march Gandhi sells khadi cloth, collects purses for the cause, gives speeches, attends to correspondence, nurses some of the marchers who have taken ill. He exhorts the village headmen and Mukhis to resign and his speeches contain references to the numbers who resigned. One also gets a picture of the social situation of the time. A Harijan offering Gandhi cotton led some to leave the meeting. Gandhi makes it a point to visit the Harijan houses in some villages and remarks about their exclusion to the other villagers, thereby exhorting them to change. The marchers also come across many weddings at that time in the villages, ostensibly to avoid the Sarda Act on child marriages that was to be enforced from April 1, 1930.

As the march progresses one notices the enthusiasm swelling, more numbers of Government officials resigning, public auctions raising money—Gandhi sells a silver snuff box as a good receptacle for medicine and stamps, and khadi sales soaring not just in Gujarat but all around the country. Gandhi enjoys the title of "Salt Thief" and comments that it is more difficult to be a salt thief than a Mahatma. Weber brings these aspects of the march in a laid back style without indulging in any journalistic flourishes or exaggerations.

The book has some very interesting documents quoted at length like the letters of Gandhi to the Viceroy, Webb Miller's eye-witness account of the self suffering of the satyagrahis during the "raids" at Dharasana salt works, and Gandhi's moving letter handing over the Ashram to the Government. Weber follows up the day to day account of the march (March 12–April 6) with chapters on the spread of the movement, Gandhi's arrest, the raids at Dharasana, participation of women in the Civil Disobedience movement and a very interesting one on "The Battle in the Press" where he traces the way the event was represented very differently by the establishment papers. American press and the nationalist press.

The book though lengthy is comprehensive and is likely to become an authoritative one on the subject. The book is not without its errors. One is in disagreement with Weber's interpretation of the worth of Katherine Mayo's book *Mother India* in the struggle. It is true that Gandhi and many others were pained at the way India was portrayed; Gandhi calling it a "Drain Inspector's Report". But it can hardly claim any merit in helping Gandhi focus attention on India's internal problems. Similarly to interpret Haridas Mazumdar's inclusion by Gandhi, the only marcher not bound by the Ashram vows as he was a guest, for Muzumdar's possible influence in giving a truer picture of India to the American, is questionable. Gandhi was keen to have people with an academic bent of mind spend time with him at the field; for them to better understand, even find fault with, the theories of Gandhian thought that they wrote about. This comes through amply in Nirmal Bose's book on Gandhi at Noakhali. One is also left with a feeling of incompleteness of a narrative that starts with an autobiography and does not end with answers to questions that Weber posed. The reader, at the end of the book, is not clear whether Weber has finally placed his finger on what it was in Gandhi that touched him deeply.

The most serious error however is the way the book has been designed. The repeated use of the icon drawn from the picture of Gandhi picking salt in the book is ironical and misrepresents Weber's work. If Weber had to undertake a march to prove that the often used photograph of Gandhi picking salt has been wrongly attributed to Dandi, the publishers seem to perpetuate the myth that Weber has tried deconstructing. These blemishes apart, the book is likely to fulfill Weber's original intent of the march, namely that Indian history would be taught with more interest in Australia. One certainly hopes books such as these will help make teaching of history more lively in India.

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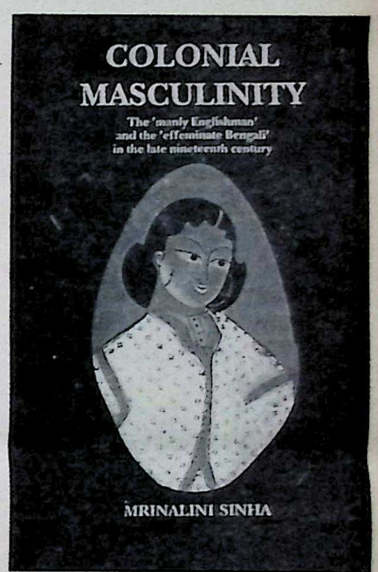
Colonial Constructs of Two Elites

Kunal Chakrabarti

COLONIAL MASCULINITY: THE 'MANLY ENGLISHMAN' AND THE 'EFFEMINATE BENGALI' IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By Mrinalini Sinha

Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 191+x, price not mentioned.



This book examines the processes and practices through which two differently positioned elites, among the colonizers and the colonized, were constituted respectively as the manly Englishman and the effeminate Bengali in the late nineteenth century. By this period, in the colonial ordering of masculinity, in which senior British officials associated with the administrative and military establishment and elite non-officials occupied the highest position, the politically self-conscious Indian intellectuals, typically exemplified by the middle-class Bengali Hindus, came to be regarded as the representatives of a perverted form of the supposed masculine ideal—effeminate, bookish, slothful and lacking in self-discipline. These stereotypes underpinned many of the legislative and administrative controversies of British India in the 1880s and 1890s: those connected with the 'white mutiny' against the Ilbert Bill in 1883, the official government response to the Native Volunteer Movement in 1885, the recommendations of the Public Service Commission of 1886, and the Indian opposition to the Age of Consent Bill in 1891. Through a detailed study of the circumstances leading to and the manner of resolution of these controversies, the book attempts to explore how colonial masculinity, in the context of the changes in the imperial social formation in the late nineteenth century, produced and exploited these two contrasting images.

The argument of the book proceeds from two basic basic assumptions. The first is that the categories of the colonizer and colonized are not fixed or self-evident. Therefore, these two historically constructed categories had to be repeatedly redefined. Similarly, the relations between the colonizer and the colonized were constantly rearticulated in accordance with the continually changing political and economic imperatives of colonial rule. Thus the figures of the manly Englishman and effeminate Bengali must be examined in relation to specific practices of ruling rather than as products of a universalized colonial condition. The second assumption of the book is that the contours of colonial masculinity were shaped in the context of an imperial social formation that included both Britain and India. The manly Englishman and its counterfoil the effeminate Bengali were thus constituted in relation to colonial Indian society as well as to some aspects of late nineteenth century British society such as the emergence of the 'New Woman', the remarking of the working class, the legacy of 'internal colonialism', and the anti-feminist backlash of the 1880s and 1890s. This focus points not only to the intersection of the imperial with the categories of nation, race, class and gender, but also to the essentially uneven and contradictory nature of that intersection. These two assumptions have informed all the major issues raised in the book.

The chapters in the book have been organized both chronologically and thematically. Starting from the consolidation of Anglo-Indian public opinion in the Ilbert Bill controversy in 1883 to the recuperation of Indian nationalist politics in the Indian opposition to the Age of Consent Bill in 1891, each of the four chapters examines the implications

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of colonial masculinity and effeminacy in a separate colonial controversy. Chapter one discusses the intersections of the politics of masculinity with the politics of womanhood in the Ilbert Bill controversy. The Bill was meant to empower Indian civil servants with criminal jurisdiction over European British subjects in country stations. The British protest against the Bill, prompted by their belief in racial exclusivity but articulated in terms of adherence of possible injustice that could now be perpetrated by the Bengali magistrates on the unblemished 'English lady', forced several modifications which dissipated the original intention of the Bill. The next chapter is about the intersection of colonial masculinity with the politics of class in the Native Volunteer Movement. Although the struggle of middle-class Bengalis for the right to bear arms gave rise to the emergence of a new critique of colonial policies as having emasculated the Bengali male, it also exposed the limits of a nationalist politics based on the bid of a propertied class to reclaim their masculinity. The discussion of the Public Service Commission of 1886 in chapter three demonstrates the impact of the policy of 'divide and rule', which fostered discrete linguistic, ethnic, provincial, and religious representations of Indian masculinity. The subsequent fragmentation of the civil service along provincial lines, as recommended by the Commission, intervened in the claims of the indigenous elites to the representational status of 'Indians'. The last chapter examines the controversy over the age of consent Bill which aimed at protecting young girls in India from the premature consummation of child marriage. By making visible the politics of colonial masculinity in the debate that followed the introduction of the Bill, the chapter qualifies the role of the Indian opposition to the Bill in revitalizing nationalist politics.

The book has very creatively used the Saidian concept of Orientalism for an understanding of the exercise of colonial power in late nineteenth century India. The author has argued, along with several other critics of Said, that to trace the genesis of Orientalism to the ways in which ancient Greeks or medieval Europeans perceived racial or cultural others is to miss the historical specificity of the material conditions for modern European imperialism and the Orientalist enterprise.

Although the author's claim that the emerging dynamics between colonial and nationalist politics in the 1880s and 1890s in India is "best captured" in the logic of colonial masculinity is perhaps exaggerated, the achievements of the book are many. In the first place, unlike some studies on the psychology of colonialism, such as by Ashis Nandy for instance, the focus of this book is much more on the material, historical specificity of colonial masculinity in the late nineteenth century rather than on broad historical generalizations. The historical approach of the book has led to a more complex conceptualization of the notions of modern western and traditional Indian masculinity as discrete or mutually exclusive categories by a recognition of their mutual implication in imperial politics. A sustained focus on the imperial constitution of colonial masculinity has also served to refine the standard historical scholarship on nineteenth century British masculinity. The discussion of the Public Service Commission of 1886 that finally secured Oxbridge domination of the civil service in India, for example, demonstrates how the imperial context extends the analysis of the function of the public-school ideal of manliness in the nineteenth century. The book thus contributes to the notion that aspects of metropolitan culture were formed at the so-called imperial periphery. However, while emphasizing the need to recognize both the imperial and the colonial contexts, the book cautions against simply conflating the metropolitan with the colonial. In other words, it underscores the importance of adequately historicizing the relationship between the two.

Another contribution of the book is that it effectively demonstrates that the gendered constructs of the manly Englishman and the effeminate Bengali were in fact overdetermined by various intersecting late nineteenth century ideologies of race, ethnicity, class, religion and sexuality. By focusing on colonial masculinity as the site for understanding the organization of power in colonial India, the book attempts to get at the multiple axes of domination and subordination in colonial Indian society as a whole. The ways in which the politics of gender itself was complicated by its intersection with other categories is brought out in the discussion of the Ilbert Bill. In this racial controversy an effort was made to construct an alternative politics—what one white woman in India called the 'pride of womanhood'. This effort, however, foundered on the issue of the different ways in which British women and Indian women understood such a politics. At the same time the book attempts to complicate the *a priori* prioritization of gender or of any one category of analysis over another in the construction of the colonial politics of masculinity. Whereas in the discussion of the Ilbert Bill controversy, for example, the author highlights gender identities as an important context for colonial masculinity, in the native volunteer controversy the role of class identities has been highlighted. The author argues that such an overdetermined context for analysing colonial masculinity in fact broadens the significance of a feminist historiography.

Finally, the book has very creatively used the Saidian concept of Orientalism for an understanding of the exercise of colonial power in late nineteenth century India. The author has argued, along with several other critics of Said, that to trace the genesis of Orientalism to the ways in which ancient Greeks or medieval Europeans perceived racial or cultural others is to miss the historical specificity of the material conditions for modern European imperialism and the Orientalist enterprise. A critic of modern European imperialism, therefore, must recognize that the historical specificity of the Orientalist enterprise was not simply that the Orient was constructed as the racial or cultural Other of Europe; but, even more importantly, that both Europe and the Orient were constructed in the realm of ideals of racial essences, the function of which was to suppress the more complex material history of the regions now designated as Europe and the Orient. The book therefore argues that it was precisely because colonial race relations were constantly rearticulated in response to changes in material conditions that a universalizing account of colonial race politics cannot be adequate for understanding the colonial constructs of the manly Englishman and the effeminate Bengali *babu*. The construct of the effeminate Bengali, for example, was substantially modified to respond to the political and economic shifts of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The one significant inadequacy in the book is the author's neglect of the indigenous elite's response to the colonial construction of masculinity and effeminacy except their internalization of these constructs. Indeed, in the author's understanding this internalization appears to have been so complete that even the contestation of the constructs revolved within the parameters set by the colonial discourse alone. There can be no doubt that the colonial state was powerful, that a section of the elite collaborated with the state for its own interest and therefore must have shared some of the assumptions on which the colonial state was built, that there must have been considerable overlap in the manner in which patriarchy exercised its domination in Indian and British societies. But, surely there was some space which was not altogether governed by the overwhelmingly dominant colonial discourse, where a section of the elite was attempting to redefine the traditional Indian notions of masculinity and effeminacy on its own. The revival of the culture of gymnasiums in late nineteenth century Bengal might have been in response to the colonial derogation of the absence of physical prowess among the Bengali *babus*, but when Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya was constructing the ideal man in Krishna, it does not seem to have been just a case of defensive response. Besides, a number of those Bengalis, who had taken up the bomb to the surprised displeasure of the manly Englishman in the first two decades of the twentieth century, did not belong to what Dinabandhu Mitra called "the *babus* class", and several others opted out of this class to broaden the space which the colonial discourse could not completely penetrate. Admittedly, it is not possible to discuss all the issues which so comprehensive a theme as colonial masculinity would raise, but an awareness of this important dimension of the theme would have further enriched the volume.

The book thus contributes to the notion that aspects of metropolitan culture were formed at the so-called imperial periphery.

The book has made use of a large corpus of contemporary literature on aspects of gender, race and class. Therefore, a consolidated bibliography at the end would have been helpful, particularly in view of the fact that the small print in the notes may dampen the enthusiasm of the most determined reader.

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Engaging With Indian Politics

Kamal Mitra Chenoy

STATE AND POLITICS IN INDIA

Edited by Partha Chatterjee

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 576, Rs. 650.00

A POSSIBLE INDIA: ESSAYS IN POLITICAL CRITICISM

Edited by Partha Chatterjee

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 301, Rs. 495.00

There appear to be three Partha Chatterjees. The first is the celebrated political theorist, author of *The Nation and Its Fragments*, contributor to the Subaltern Studies volumes and other widely read texts. The second is the writer of the Marxist essays in English and Bengali, a selection of which is reprinted in *A Possible India*. The third Chatterjee avatar is the journeyman political scientist who has edited *State and Politics in India*. Apart from the well-known name, none of the three incarnations appear to overlap.

Quite frankly, Chatterjee's edited volume of articles on State and Politics in India is disappointing. Not for its selection of papers which are competent enough and relevant, but because of the ordinary and uninspiring introduction to the volume. For a scholar of Chatterjee's standing, this introduction is embarrassingly poor. The 39 page introduction is sketchy in its description, with analysis all but absent, negotiated act of transfer of power from the British rulers..." There is no mention of the protracted struggle for independence stretching back at least to the Revolt of 1857. There is no discussion of how the Indian Constitution was framed. Considering how the Constitution has provided a crucial framework for politics in India, the absence of this discussion compounded by the absence of any article on the Constitution is untenable for a volume on such a topic. This is intriguing because two noted commentators on the Indian constitution, S.K. Chaube and S. Datta Gupta have both been Chatterjee's colleagues in the Centre for the Study of Social Sciences, Calcutta. One can only assume that the editor did not consider such an inclusion necessary. But this is a serious shortcoming in any Reader of this type.

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The description of the Congress Party is sketchy. Its umbrella character embracing all major classes, castes and communities is not brought out. Thus the analysis of the development and decline of that party is unconvincing. Chatterjee does not refer to Francine Frankel's well known text examining the rise of the rich agriculturists and their impact on State politics and the inner dynamics of the Congress. Though the analysis of the 1996 election results is expectedly short, there does not appear to be any appreciation of the significance of the consolidation of the United Front government for federal and regional politics in the country. Any later edition of this book should incorporate at least one specific article on this event and its significance. In addition, if the BJP manages to form a government after the coming General Elections, then that too will have to be examined.

The selection of articles is uneven. The first section on "The System" includes only Sudipta Kaviraj's article, "A Critique of the Passive Revolution". Even if Chatterjee is interested in only reprinting articles on class/elite struggles for state power in this section, he should have included selections from Rajni Kothari and Pranab Bardhan, if not others. He might have noted in his introduction to this section that his fellow subalternist Kaviraj no longer follows his erstwhile Marxist mode of analysis. The second section on "The Institutions", lacks as indicated earlier any examination of the Indian Constitution. Though it includes B.P.R. Vithal's interesting piece on "Evolving Trends in the Bureaucracy", it has nothing on the judiciary. This is a surprising absence in a volume published in 1997, when so much has been written and spoken on judicial activism and its impact on Indian politics. Selections from Upendra Baxi's or Rajeev Dhawan's writings on the subject could have been included.

Chatterjee's own article in this section, "Development Planning and the Indian State" is inadequate. There is little real analysis of the politics of planning, including the now fairly well researched area of lobbying by Indian big business. There is no reference to the old work by Michael Kidron, or the more recent studies by Ranajit Dasgupta and Stanley Kochanek. Though Chatterjee refers to the National Planning Committee he does appear to be aware of some of its sub-committees which recommended substantial state ownership and control of the economy. In January 1948, the AICC's Economic Programme Committee headed by Nehru recommended major nationalisations and state ownership of key industries as well as nationalisation of banking and insurance. There is no reference to this in the editor's own article. Further, in the course of Indian capitalist development the big capitalists increased their economic assets, and consequently their political influence. This changing balance in the dominant coalition in the Indian state is not dealt with in this article.

The core question which should be dealt with in such an article is the impact development strategy had on political equations in Indian politics including within the ruling power bloc. This is not dealt with at all. Therefore, the impact of development planning on the Indian state, its political disposition of power, its pattern of alliances, its strategies, is not examined. Unfortunately, as Chatterjee could point out, this is not a well researched area. But surely, one could expect this in an article by a scholar of his quality? In any event, Chatterjee could have examined these questions in his introduction to this section which is perfunctory.

The third section, "The Political Process: Dominance" is quite skimpy. What are the dominant class-caste configurations? Here the editor cannot claim a paucity of work. In the Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao edited volume there are a number of informative articles that could have been included. There have also been a number of significant articles in journals like the *Economic and Political Weekly* and the *Social Scientist*. In the post-Mandal political scenario this is a serious omission. Here, as before, is where one misses the other Partha Chatterjees. Neither the Subaltern Chatterjee, nor his Marxist *avatar* would have missed such major questions, which are also not addressed in his bridge introduction to this section.

After this the fourth and final section, "The Political Process: Resistance" can scarcely suffice. There is no article on the grassroots movements e.g. the Narmada Bachao Andolan, Chipko Movement, Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha, etc. This absence is quite remarkable for a major Subaltern Studies collective member, a group that was created to ensure the recording of these marginal voices. Once again Chatterjee's hats do not mix: one incarnation does not interact with the others.

Thus this volume is a fairly resounding disappointment. This set of readings has no conclusion. Not even the apology for one! If the introduction had made up, by rounding off the analysis edited in this volume that would have sufficed. But that, alas, was not done. Can one dare hope for a more serious, substantially recast second edition? It is sorely needed, and few scholars would be more capable than Chatterjee in filling this breach.

Chatterjee's book of essays *A Possible India* is much more rewarding. He humbly "offer[s] this volume in place of the book on Indian politics that [he] will never write." If indeed, we are fated to be bereft of his volume on Indian politics, then these essays will have to suffice. Here he is wearing another hat, this time in his Marxist incarnation. This collection is particularly valuable because it includes essays translated from the Bengali which otherwise would be unavailable for the non-Bengali speaking reader. A number of short pieces from the influential Maoist journal *Frontier* have also been incorporated into this handy volume. Thus this book represents the second Partha Chatterjee at his best, as a persuasive but trenchant Marxist critic of Indian politics.

The overall theoretical concern in this volume in the essays that encompass some twenty years of the author's engagement with Indian politics is the focus on "the politics of the governed". Therefore, as Chatterjee puts it, "The perspective is oppositional, negative, resolutely critical... Contrary to liberal preaching, it is conscious of the fact that the critical issue of governance in many

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Chatterjee's book of essays *A Possible India* is . . . particularly valuable because it includes essays translated from the Bengali which otherwise would be unavaible for the non-Bengali speaking reader.

post-colonial countries is increasingly being posed as the opposition between capitalist growth and democracy". He, of course, stands squarely on the side of democracy "to fight strategically and to dream within the realms of the possible".

The first essay is a review of Suniti Kumar Ghosh's study of the Indian big bourgeoisie where he examines the theses of whether these big capitalists are comprador or national. Chatterjee's conclusion that "the old problem of comprador/national developed in the context of the pre-World War II situation is now obsolete" now sounds prophetic. Few Marxists enter into that debate now, knowing that the so-called national bourgeoisie, in the form of big capitalists is now quite willing to play a subsidiary role to foreign finance capital. It therefore no longer corresponds to the stereotypical self-reliant capitalist dedicated to independent capitalist development.

Chatterjee's essay "Indian democracy and bourgeois reaction" written jointly with Arup Mallik three months before the internal emergency examines the contradictions of bourgeois democracy in India. He sees the Congress split of 1969 and the reorganization of the party machinery under Indira Gandhi as a "Caesarist restoration." This concept taken from Gramsci refers to an authoritarian reorganization of political power, when it is threatened by opposing class forces. Gramsci sees the need for the dominant forces to divide the opposition to reduce the threat to it. Thus, "It is necessary for the dominant social form to preserve this weakness: that is why we have asserted that modern Caesarism is more a police than military system." Interestingly, Chatterjee then argued, "that as far as the present ruling classes in India are concerned, it is not desirable for them, for structural reasons, to abandon electoral democracy". But as the emergency showed just three months later, the ruling classes were quite prepared to truncate and curb electoral democracy, though not to abandon it altogether.

Other essays in the volume are topical looking at the political scenario in 1977, when the Janata Party replaced the Congress in the central government for the first time. It examines Charan Singh's revolt which led to the replacement of the Janata, and then at the final phase of Indira Gandhi's rule. Other essays look at the Rajiv Gandhi regime's rise and fall, the coming of the Janata Dal, its own fall, and the political crisis of 1991 where he refers to the July 1991 budget as "nothing short of a *coup d'état*". Chatterjee's very important and controversial essay "Secularism and Toleration" is reprinted towards the end of the volume. His critique of Indian secularism has been sharply contested. It is arguable that secularism is not as flawed in its operation in India as Chatterjee argues. In any event the empowerment of religious minorities allowing them their own religious laws subject to their own communities' sanction and disapproval, is a dangerous suggestion. Religious communities are scarcely democratically composed and organized. Women and lower castes are virtually disempowered. They would be likely to receive more justice from even a flawed secular state than from the majoritarian consensus in a religious community.

Therefore, contrary to Chatterjee's claim that his "proposals for a reconfiguration of the problem of secularism in India and a redefinition of the concept of toleration" is only "to err on the side of democracy" is quite contentious. Many, including this reviewer would argue, that his proposed empowerment of religious communities would only empower dominant, male chauvinist, upper casteist hierarchies which would in effect disempower the majority within the community. His proposal therefore, err not on the side of democracy and toleration, but on the side of religious autocracy, reaction and intolerance.

But for all the disagreements one might have with some of Chatterjee's formulations, his essays remain stimulating and theoretically engaging. Moreover, he does have his adherents, not only in this country. This therefore, is an attractive selection of articles, made even more useful by the inclusion of papers originally published in Bengali, as well as the author's important article on "Secularism and Toleration". A reviewer can do nothing other than commend this volume to the readers. Since this hardback is a hefty Rs. 495.00, one hopes a paperback edition will soon be forthcoming.

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The Metaphor That Was Vietnam

Rami Chhabra

FOLLOWING HO CHI MINH: MEMOIRS OF A NORTH VIETNAMESE COLONEL

By Bui Tin

Hurst and Co., U.K., 1995, pp. 202, £25.00

To my generation, which entered adulthood on the cusp of the fifties-sixties decade, Vietnam was not just another nation. It was a powerful metaphor. The modern equivalent of the David-Goliath myth; the name itself a potent slogan, a synonym for the inherent might of right.

Television had newly entered our lives then. Its news focus was yet a discreet presence; but enough to bring into our homes the full horror of the Viet Nam war. And equally, the vibrance of the flower-power peace marches of the American youth protesting their country's military offensives in a far-off land.

In the summer of '75, when Saigon fell to the Viet Cong, the electrifying scenes of those last helicopter flights from the rooftop of the US Embassy, now etched in history, also evoked an admiring wonder for a barefoot, guerrilla people who had so routed the world's mightiest nation.

Returning to Vietnam after more than two decades the most vivid impression that came across was of the chaotically zooming motorcycle hordes across Saigon's thoroughfares and in Hanoi the bustling, cigarette-smoke-filled eating joints teeming with young jean and leather-jacketed Vietnamese looking for a fast buck, and, in umpteen, older eyes across the nation a haunted lost and hurt look that seems to ask: 'where did we go wrong'?

For me personally, Vietnam was soon to come to occupy a very special niche in my career, as that 1975 summer brought an UN invitation with an air-ticket to the International Women's Conference in Mexico City. That I was able to turn this travel-opportunity across the globe to enter the still-turbulent, newly-united country is a story in itself I became the first journalist from the non-communist world to enter Vietnam post-war and to undertake a 2000 kilometer road journey from Hanoi down the still mine-lined Highway No. 1 to the curfew-bound Ho Chi Minh City as Saigon had been just renamed, and onto the Mekong Delta. It was a world scoop that the world press ran. Readers will permit me the indulgence of reminiscing briefly about that, and a more recent travel to Vietnam, for these personal memories, inevitably, form the context within which I comment on the book in hand: *Following Ho Chi Minh, Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel.*

Seeing Vietnam in that first flush of victory was an extraordinary experience—and not just because it was a journalistic scoop. Hanoi, unbearably, enervatingly humid and hot that torrid July month, with scarcely a working fan in the city, nevertheless pulsated with magnetic energy. The pride of the people in themselves, their country, their integrity and discipline was palpable. While this was something that I would imbibe over the weeks I would be there, my first encounter with Vietnamese pride in their integrity was somewhat strange.

There was no lock on the door of the room I booked into at the only major hotel in Hanoi. My complaint was received with bewilderment. There was no lock on any door, I was told. My own disbelief was outmatched by that of the hotel staff who assured me that there had never ever been a theft. And when I hesitantly disclosed my concern as more for my own personal safety they simply looked askance and assumed they had not heard me right!

Out in the countryside, travelling through Hathin and onto Hue on the 17th Parallel that had once divided North and South, one saw banana-clumped, bamboo homesteads in meticulously worked paddy fields mocking the bombed shells of concrete buildings, bomb-craters craftily turned into fishponds testified to the resilience of the Vietnamese spirit. Without exception the people's clothes were drab, the women all in black pyjamas, the men in olive uniforms. But there was an unmistakable lilt to their walk.

No doubt, there was the dazed sense of shock of the North Vietnamese entering the South for the first time and seeing a level of material prosperity that they had not known could exist. But while the pavements spilled with all kinds of goods—from cameras and airconditioners to imported foodstuffs, the vendors could be seen selling their wares without fear of any looting or grabbing. However, an essential shopping trophy—mostly bought by foregone meals—carried by almost every returning Northerner was a small table fan—the ultimate luxury touch from the South to spartan lives and requirements.

Notwithstanding the claustrophobic structured meetings and debriefings one went through, one could not but admire the exemplary conduct of those one came in contact with and note the concerted effort to forge reconciliation. However, even my mostly admiring but candid articles were to draw a formal protest from the Vietnamese unused to criticism of any sort.

Returning to Vietnam after more than two decades the most vivid impression that came across was of the chaotically zooming motorcycle hordes across Saigon's thoroughfares and in Hanoi the bustling, cigarette-smoke-filled eating joints teeming with young jean and leather-jacketed Vietnamese looking for a fast buck, and, in umpteen, older eyes across the nation a haunted lost and hurt look that seems to ask: 'where did we go wrong'?

One follower of the Ho Chi Minh trail—a senior doctor who left behind his bride of a few days and aged parents, returning only for three or four fleeting visits over a sixteen year span—confessed: "My month's salary does not cover the meal we are sitting down to, but the smugglers all ride BMWs. How do you expect us to feel? But what can one do?"

Following Ho Chi Minh, the Memoirs of Col. Bui Tin, a party worker for 45 years, who served as a journalist and trusted emissary in many important official assignments has no answers, but it eloquently documents that growing anguish. Bui Tin was Deputy Editor of *Nhan Dan*, the Communist Party Daily, when he left his homeland for an official tour in France in 1990—and stayed on. The gum-chewing motor-cycle hordes and BMWs were still in the future; but a decade and a half had already clearly faltered. Unlike the Ho Chi Minh trail-runner I met, Col Bui Tin managed better. Indeed, the memoir's jacket blurb highlights the comment of some foreign journalists on Bui Tin: "He was always in the right place at the right time." From official spokesperson at the 1973 Paris talks for the return of US prisoners of war to the accidental recipient of the South Vietnamese government's formal surrender to the front rankers amongst entrants into Pol Pot-ravaged Phnom Penh, Bui Tin managed a ringside seat across the years, on events, people and places shrouded from the rest of the world; equally capably, he managed an exit to a new niche.

His memoirs, originally written in Viet Namese in 1991 and translated/adapted by BBC veterans with a foreword by an Australian defence academician seem to have Bui Tin firmly continuing his tradition as a man in the right place at the right time. He details corruption, in-fighting and alienation as inherent in the communist system, which he now calls "a spiritual prison". As expected the book has received warm notices in the West.

Undoubtedly, Bui Tin provides a mine of information garnered from his special vantage point in this society. He builds an effective portrait of a nation that knew how to war but not to construct. As Bui Tin describes in a chapter entitled Arrogance: "The basic fact is that in 1975 the leadership became lax, intoxicated and dizzy with their families, their children, their homes and their property."

The first half of the book which recalls the pre-reconciliation period is the more powerful and I found ample evidence bearing out my own impressionistic observations. As Bui Tin writes: "During the war the morale of the people was good because they believed in the struggle and in ultimate victory. I recall that during the bombing raids carried out by the Americans, goods were unloaded besides the roads and railway stations. There was rice, tinned meat, sugar and milk but nobody touched it. People left their homes to evacuate to the countryside without bothering to lock the door. . . at night women used to cycle upto fifty kilometers through the darkness to fetch food for their children. They came to no harm. In the countryside the peasants helped all the evacuated families to settle in. I think most people had a good and loving heart, particularly when the country was subject to foreign aggres-

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sion. And to put it bluntly it was due to basic tradition. It had nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism, socialism or class struggle. . . after April 1975 the situation changed rapidly. People became far more pragmatic and interested in profit and at the same time less trustworthy."

But his description of the build up of corruption has roots already there in the special shops and privileges of the Nomenklatura or the top brass of the North. The inadequacy of governance amongst those thrown into power and the petty inpoliticking should make interesting reading for anyone closely concerned with the country's history. About the only major personality to emerge unscathed from Bui's account is Gen Giap, for whom there is unstinted praise.

Even Ho Chi Minh emerges as a somewhat pale character caught in the thrall of Stalin and Mao and self-perpetuating his own praise through writing about himself under a pseudonym (uncritically, unlike Nehru) and promoting self-styled titles to become the nation's Uncle Ho and then Father of the Nation.

But although Bui mourns the passing of national values after 1975 and provides graphic descriptions of earlier hardships well-endured, he pinpoints the spread of Maoism after 1951 as stultifying consciences, evaporating basic national values, sense of pride and self-confidence. This account renders the proud Vietnamese as somewhat mindless lackeys carrying out whatever the Chinese said. This aspect I find somewhat surprising. My own conversations in 1975 pointed to a thousand year rivalry and deep distrust of the Chinese big-brother-neighbour. Besides, could the character of the long struggle have been forged in this manner?

Altogether, anyone looking for a meticulous marshalling of historical facts with prismatic flashes of insights into the complexity of situations that eventually brought a brave nation to its economic knees will be somewhat disappointed. This is after all one man's account—claimed as an authentic intimate insider's knowledge of meetings, trips and documents not generally accessed. His individual bias has to be taken or left at face value. Accordingly, one can never be sure whether Bui has been careful or cavalier with his facts.

A look at the treatment of a small, key incident points to a need for caution. Looking at what Professor Thayer's introduction to the book calls its most "startling" and controversy-generating of the "ethical, moral and political judgements about contemporary Vietnam, its political system and its leaders": the deconstructing of Ho Chi Minh, with the revelation of his two marriages, contrary to the celibate status claimed by and for the leader.

Bui Tin's scholarship on this the most startling of his exposes is nothing more than a nine line paragraph. The evidence he marshals in support is merely reference to a conversation with one Daniel Hemery a French scholar who told him that Ho Chi Minh had two wives: there is a bald repetition of names and years and the information that the editor of a youth newspaper was dismissed from her post in 1991 for publishing a report on Ho's second marriage. One would have expected some more light thrown on why Bui believes that the two marriages did take place—what happened to the wives and why Ho did not own them. But Bui merely states and moves on.

These are the memoirs of a journalist used to writing to project one view: simplistically stating a set of facts which the reader is expected to accept. His acute disillusionment with the system within which he functioned with aplomb for so long is the principal *leitmotif* as he now exults on emerging snowdrops after a Paris winter, flowers he has never known in Vietnam. For all this, his love for his homeland is also obvious; but ingrained are the skills in propagandizing, even if it is now in reverse. His judgements therefore would have to be sifted for gossip and fact by those with equal access to that history.

Perhaps this book's most important contribution will lie in what Bui Tin hopes will happen—the start of a new debate on Vietnam.

Rami Chhabra, a columnist and social activist, has worked with television. Her series on journey through Vietnam in July 1975 was carried by The Sunday Standard (Indian Express) *for three successive weeks, and was covered by* Doordarshan *as well as the international print media* The New York Times, Guardian, Australian *and* Dapens Nyheter.

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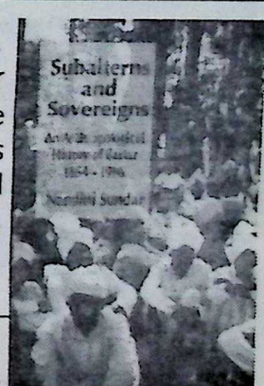

V.K. KRISHNA MENON: A PERSONAL MEMOIR /Janaki Ram

This is a very personal portrait of one of the most controversial — and misunderstood — figures in India politics, India's first High Commissioner in Britain, V.K. Krishna Menon, Janaki Ram, bases herself on a family archive of letters, personal recollections and interviews with Menon's friends and colleagues in an attempt at a fresh look at Menon's friends and collegues in an attempt at a fresh look at Menon's long public career.

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Interface Between Human Rights and Environment

Mahesh Rangarajan

LIFE AND DEATH MATTERS: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

Edited by Barbara Rose Johnson

Altamira Press, a division of Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 350, $48 (cloth), $23.95 (Paper)

The end of the century and the millennium marks a milestone in more ways than one. If the threat of a nuclear catastrophe has receded and the leaders of nation-states have begun to negotiate common responses to global warming, there is no shortage of 'silent crises' to be tackled. The collapse of life support systems, whether in a pond or at a planet-wide level calls for urgent, even rapid action. But, discussions on the environment often get pushed to the background in a world preoccupied with issues of war and peace, prosperity and poverty. But the ecological challenges of today are neither local nor regional in nature. Movements of share prices in the stock market may fuel or alternately brake deforestation. The fall-out from nuclear explosions no less than exhaust from an automobile recognizes no political boundary. Yet, even exposure to environmental risk, whether pesticide contamination in a rice paddy field or nuclear radiation near a test site, is not 'evenly distributed' across classes and nations. The issues of protecting the earth are in no way separate from the all too familiar themes of social science: hierarchies of power and knowledge, or alternately, the potential for achieving equity and justice. *Life and Death Matters* is a volume that explores just this interface by focusing on the relationship of human rights and the environment.

The volume is organized into compact sections, each of which contains two papers. The first part examines the processes of economic development in two large Asian countries, Indonesia and China. Lorraine Aragon's work on the outer islands of Indonesia shows how the very forces of market-led growth that generate wealth are also rapidly, even irreversibly, transforming the rain forest and not always for the better. As the government encourages large-scale settlement in the islands, it marginalises resident peoples. The attack is a two-pronged one, for loggers cut down swathes of forest; and what is left is taken over by the government. The paper on 'Uncommon Property Rights in south West China' by Swope and others traces the shift from communal institutions to state control in Lijiang county in China's Yunnan province. Here, there is clearly an alternative in the form of locally rooted protective institutions but these may be undermined by the escalating value of timber in the market.

The section serves to emphasize how the two great institutions of modern society, the market and the state, while integrating people and places either through networks of trade or codes of regulations, are also unleashing destructive forces. These are not all new, but their scale and power are certainly unprecedented. Both the dignity of the individual citizen and the regenerative capacity of the earth will require new safeguards against such forces.

In Amazonia, neither the federal Brazilian government nor the provincial administration is willing or able to protect local residents or biotic wealth from the ecological havoc and enormous social dislocation caused by gold-diggers. The resident indigenous tribes are so marginal in the power structure that their crisis of survival hardly evokes an effective response from those who wield authority. The socio-political context of such environmental conflicts is all-important. Gedicks sketches how a multi-pronged counter-offensive against miners in Wisconsin won significant victories. In a case study that may evoke interest among urban wildlife lovers and tribal grassroots groups in India, the Wisconsin coalition included suburban sportsmen and native Americans, each with distinct and even conflicting views on how to relate to the land but with a common objective of safeguarding the ecosystem from mining. The extraction of minerals from the earth, whether of fossil fuels like coal, or of raw materials such as bauxite, is one of the most significant ways in which modern technology scars the land. Sponsel's careful study of gold mining in Amazonia is illuminating for he emphasizes how mercury contamination of the environment and the health hazards it poses can be minimized if miners accept lower levels of profit.

Unlike mines which Arcadian Greens world wide see as a creation (or a curse) of industrial society, agriculture seems a lot more benign. But the advent of high yeilding varieties based on intensive use of petro-chemical based inputs raises new anxieties even as it generates two blades of corn where only one grew before. The section on agriculture details the experiments in organic farming in the USA in a paper by Wheeler and Pascino; Philips' contribution on the Honduras is a more grim rendering of the struggle of small cultivators for land rights. If in the first case, the conflict is over the control of knowledge, the latter is all about smallholders battling landed interests and trans-national capital. The Honduran government treats even peaceful protest: the entry of tribals into disputed forests or harvesting of crops in contested fields as violations of the law. These 'acts of terrorism' as they are labelled evoke swift, brutal responses. The struggle for control of forest or farm is thus both an environmental and a social issue. What is significant is that, for all the differences, organic farmers in the US and the Honduran peasants envision the land as a place to live in: to grow crops, harvest grain or timber, raise livestock or catch fish. How they make their choices about what to produce will have enormous implications for the landscape. This is a vision that is wider and more realstic than that of conventional wildlife preservationists whose idea of landscapes is of nature despoiled by any human incursions.

The conservation of biological diversity, of the spectrum of the earth's life forms from crabs and crustaceans to whales, ferns and gorillas, might seem to be an issue that stands 'above' sectional political conflicts. Even President George Bush did not stand in the way of a global convention on bio-diversity at Rio de Janerio in 1992. Still, as the editor of this volume reminds us, this still leaves a question of what is being preserved and for whom. As a Tyua Bushman in Botswana puts it, his opposition to wildlife laws stems from both the issue of his livelihood and his community's vision of nature, 'What we really care about are big animals. These are our food; these are what we care about. Depriving us of meat is depriving us of life and the tradition that God gave us'. Hithcock's paper on African wildlife catalogues harrowing tales of conservation through coercion. In one forest reserve in Uganda (Kibale), as many as 30,000 people were evicted in less than a week, with no notice given in advance or any meaningful compensation after their displacement. The issue of the rights of 'nature' as defined by wildlife rangers and their supporters in wildlife-related organizations cannot be seen in isolation. At times, the worst legacies of European colonial conservation, of an increasing sensitivity to wild birds and animals, plants and flowers, was combined with deepening contempt for African and Asian peasant societies. This policing approach was justified, then as now, as the only way to avert the death of nature. As the studies here explain, the search for better ways of protecting wild species or landscapes has to be combined with a willingness to acknowledge how deeply flawed this approach was. 'Participatory' methods, though now universally lauded in development literature often reproduce the same dilemmas. Derman's incisive account of development projects in the Zambezi valley shows a recurring unwillingness on the part of administrators to learn from those who work on the land.

Crucial as 'bottom-up' forms of development are, not only in and around nature reserves, but for society as a whole, they do call for a more thoroughgoing overhaul of states as they are constituted today. This observation is valid both in democratic and authoritarian polities, and in market economies as much as in (the now vanishing tribe) of centrally planned economies. One reason for this is that biodiversity issues have to be seen not only in a purely scientific sense but also in relation to the questions of knowledge, control and power. Who conserves what will hinge on how far the levers of control are in the hands of those who actually work the land, be it field, forest

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Life and Death Matters is a compelling and powerful book, all the more so because it brings together a range of specific studies that share a set of common concerns. The nature and content of development is itself intimately connected to the quality of our environment.

or river-scape. Each situation and context has its own peculiarities but the issue of basic human rights cannot be de-linked from the search from nature-friendly forms of development.

In this respect, eco-tourism or the promotion of ecologically sensitive tourism to bring foreign exchange into underdeveloped regions in return for leisure for the rich, has emerged, at times, as a catch-all solution. But notions of degradation do not stop with the physical environment or with natural biota: they extend to the impact of market-driven processes on the peoples of peripheral regions. One country where the promise and potential of these changes is evident is Mexico. The Yucatan Peninsula with its beaches and rain forests, Maya Indians and pyramids is a favourite destination for North American tourists. At the same time, the Maya themselves are only side actors in the drama. As nature and land are re-packaged for tourism, the role and place of the Maya themselves rarely receives any attention. This paper by Pi-Sunyer and Brooke-Thomas is balanced by a study of the indigenous revolution in the Chiapas region by Stea, Elgua and Bustillo. The Zapatista uprising in the mid-1990s has only confirmed that far from being a bustling economic unit within the North American economic zone, Mexico faces the same complex issues of inequity and ethnic identity that bedevil the rest of central America. Far from being the 'last blow of a dying class,' the rebellion demands closer scrutiny of the material impoverishment and political disempowerment of indigenous peasantries.

The last sections move from rebellion to the consequences of warfare and prolonged political conflict on living conditions. Wisner's fine study of the environmental aftermath of decades of apartheid in South Africa will strike a chord for any Indian reader. The dismantling of the old political order has not brought with it a miraculous transformation of urban landscapes. Well over half of all South Africans live in town or city but the task of providing housing and water, sanitation and sewerage, is sought to be accomplished by the new regime without disturbing the old economic order. Given the overriding preoccupation of many environmentalists with the 'village' and 'forest', the call for renewed attention to urban questions is apt and timely. Elsewhere in the world, political transformation is accompanied by ever more insidious and problematic threats to human health. In the Marshall islands, recently freed from US rule, radiation has severely damaged the health of residents. But nuclear tests were continuously conducted by the American armed forces for many decades. Banker asks what the Marshall Islands can now do to seek recompense for the inter-generational impact of nuclear radiation. In addition to paying for medical treatment, the US must be forced to be transparent and open in its dealings. Paula Garb's is the last paper in the volume and she raises similar problems regarding the rights of radiation victims in Russia. The construction of the Mayak nuclear weapons facility in the Chelyabinsk region in the late 1940s was followed by the increased incidence of leukemia among the minority Bashkirs and Tatars of the region. Even after the break-up of the USSR in 1991, scientists disclaim any connection between radiation and sicknesses and blame the living conditions of the minorities for their health problems. There is no easy solution to these complex dilemmas but certainly there is reason to argue against secrecy and in favour of transparency.

Life and Death Matters is a compelling and powerful book, all the more so because it brings together a range of specific studies that share a set of common concerns. The nature and content of development is itself intimately connected to the quality of our environment. It is also linked to the economic and social rights of individual citizens and of classes or communities whose lives are transformed due to economic transformation. The choice is rarely absolute but there are still choices to be made. Conservation of rare biota can be achieved via coercion or participation; tourism can be mindless or culture-sensitive; market forces can be let loose or reined in carefully. The list goes on. If social scientists excel at portraying why and when these changes happen and planners at 'what is to be done', this volume is a fine synthesis of both strands of thought. It is a book you can ill afford to miss.

Mahesh Rangarajan is a Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

The SSP Debate

Rohan D'Souza

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: STRUGGLING OVER INDIA'S NARMADA RIVER

Edited by William F. Fisher

Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 481, Rs. 800.00

The Narmada river which rises in the Central highlights of the Indian Peninsula and flows approximately 800 miles from east to west is the subject of one of the largest 'development' schemes in the world. When executed, the scheme is expected to harness the resources of the Narmada river through a series of 30 major dams, 135 medium dams, 3000 minor dams and 2 mega-dams. The notoriety associated with the plan, however, is largely informed by the determined agitation spearheaded mainly by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) against one of the mega-dams, the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP).

The book under review is a case study of the issues surrounding the construction of the SSP and is also intended as a source book on 'sustainable development'. To Fisher's credit, the seventeen essays that comprise the book have been judiciously selected with the arguments and views of both, the proponents and antagonists of the SSP, comprehensively represented. The essays have, furthermore, been divided thematically into sections on rehabilitation and resettlement, environmental and technical issues, history of the resistance to the project and an overview of the project itself. The vast range of conflicting detail and contested claims have thus been lent a taut coherence and allow the reader an easy access to the complications involved in the SSP saga.

Limitations of space, however, prevent us from outlining even a partial list of the arguments that constitute the debate on the SSP. The review, therefore, will concentrate on identifying some of the critical peaks that comprise the terrain of struggle and secondly will evaluate the editor's attempt to locate the SSP controversy in the larger context of sustainable development.

The question of rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) was certainly the spark which inflamed the first round of challenges to the project. Medha Patkar's oral account of the history of the resistance movement attests to its origins in the search for a just and participatory resettlement programme for the oustees of the project. Anil Patel of the Arch-Vahini, which was one of the first NGO's to work on the displacement issue in Gujarat, similarly points out in his essay that the government's lack of will to implement even the minimal norms on R&R motivated the Vahini to pursue a path of confrontation. The Arch-Vahini over time was not only able to expose the gulf between the government's claims on R&R with the actual ground level realities but was also able to push through a more comprehensive notion of R&R. To Anil Patel and the members of the Arch-Vahini, R&R is not merely a problem of relocation but more significantly has to address the material interests and wants of the displaced populace. To him, the predominantly tribal population of Gujarat that is affected by the project, has shown a strong preference for "good quality land, security of tenure, access to markets and other infrastructure facilities like roads, transport, electricity, schools..." In a word the real challenge against displacement lies not in preserving cultural uniqueness and the economic status quo but in advancing the quality of life of the displaced.

The Arch-Vahini perspective, however, is at sharp variance with that of the NBA. From Medha Patkar's account it is discernible that the members who later formed the NBA evolved, as it were, from a position of concentrating on a humane and acceptable R&R package to a firm conclusion that the project itself was fundamentally flawed and by consequence the inconsistencies in the R&R design were not incidental but rather endemic to the development model itself. The two paths that thus arose are clearly the result of the maturation of the movement against

Are 'local communities' necessarily organic and homogenous? What are the precise boundaries of traditional knowledge vis-a-vis modern knowledge? Are local cultures by themselves self legitimating and closed or are they open to changes in a positive sense?

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the SSP rather than a mere fallout from personality clashes or petty politicking. Unfortunately, Anil Patel's and Medha Patkar's respective views on the divergence are far from balanced. While Patel ascribes the total opposition to the dam as arising from a section of the urban intelligentsia's bid to subvert the movement(p. 190), Medha, on the other hand, hints that the Arch-Vahini prefer-red to repose faith in the government rather than squarely confront the basic issues raised by the movement (p. 162).

It is the NBA, however, which has succeeded in propelling the agitation against the SSP to an altogether new plateau of questioning. The essays by Rahul Ram, Shripad Dharmadhikari and Ashvin A. Shah lend strong credence to the fears that the supposed benefits of the SSP have been grossly exaggerated and the negative environmental consequences vastly underestimated. Rahul Ram's essay, using mostly government data and the results of the studies conducted by central government agencies, lucidly and insightfully points out that the SSP has been pivoted on a basic flaw i.e. the water yield in the Narmada river has been wrongly estimated at 27.22 MAF when it actually stands at 22.69 MAF. This is further compounded by the absence of a drinking water plan, an irrigation design that may barely realize half of its potential and a strong likelihood of widespread waterlogging and salinity in the command area. Shripad Dharmadhikari convincingly argues that the hydropower potential of the SSP will be realized only in the first stage of the project and that too will slowly be reduced to a pumped storage facility which in turn will be significantly affected by the delay in the construction of the other mega-dam, the Narmada Sagar Dam (NSP) and the decreased water yield in the Narmada river. In effect the returns on the hydropower will be negligible. Ashvin A. Shah's essay is a brilliantly argued critique of the SSP project. He draws attention to the fact that, historically, the decision to dam the Narmada river was made at a time when water scarcity in Gujarat was not acute and the SSP, in fact, is only retroactively being justified as a solution to the drought problem. His other observations on the dam clearly indicate that the SSP will involve higher costs than benefits and even those benefits will be skewed in favour of the already well-off sections in Gujarat. In contrast, Y.K. Alagh's and D.T. Buch's essay claiming that the SSP is a move in the direction of sustainable development is dense and in parts obscure. The reasoning appears to be a mere assemblage of the project's technical plans buttressed by assertions that the SSP has been sensitively designed to be cost effective and environmentally sound. None of the questions raised by the above mentioned authors have been addressed and by emphasizing on jargon the authors have defeated the purpose of trying to educate the uninformed reader.

Lastly, the essays attempting to locate the SSP controversy within the broader rubric of sustainable development by Fisher and Smithu Kothari are disappointing. While Fisher admits that the word sustainable development has come to mean "everything and nothing", he fails to clarify in what specific sense the Narmada debate has managed to arrest the slide of the term into multiple meanings. His tendency, moreover, to launch into sweeping generalities has only served to further complicate his intentions. On page 40, for example, he rounds off his introduction with a verbose:

> As a vivid illustration of a major paradigm shift in process, the Narmada controversy represents a working out, in a specific time and place, of the nature of sustainable development and social justice in an ongoing process that shapes international consciousness and affects local, national and transnational communities.

Smithu Kothari is equally at a loss to define the term and often lapses into a conceptual anarchy of sorts. The Narmada movement for him "contests the incorporation of cultures, knowledge systems and communities and the eco-systems they inhabit." He further states that the devaluing of these traditional knowledge systems and local communities could result in the destruction of potentially more sustainable and participatory production processes. He is also critical of modernity and the "monocultures of industrialism and consumerism". Throughout the essay, however, Smithu Kothari fails to clarify these categories. Are 'local communities' necessarily organic and homogenous? What are the precise boundaries of traditional knowledge vis-a-vis modern knowledge? Are local cultures by themselves self legitimating and closed or are they open to changes in a positive sense? Is it not possible, as correctly pointed out in the essay by Dhagamwar, Thukral and Singh, that the knowledge and skills that are part of a process of empowerment need not necessarily be traditional? Is there a class content to 'modernity' or is it purely ideological quantity?

In sum, the book is an excellent survey of the debate on the SSP but fails to locate the agitation and its politics in a larger context.

Rohan D'Souza is a Ph.D. student at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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Edward Said

in conversation with

Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul and Ania Loomba

Born in 1935 in Jerusalem, Edward Said is one of the most articulate advocates of Palestinian nationalism outside Israel. Living in the US since 1950, he has spent much of his academic career trying to shore up Arabic and Middle Eastern cultures against the pressures of dominant western attitudes. In his most important book, *Orientalism* (1978), he argues that for two centuries, Islamic culture has been systematically distorted or misrepresented by explorers and commentators—who have presented prejudice and the complex ideological agendas of imperialism in the guise of objective academic expertise. *The Question of Palestine* (1978) and *Covering Islam* (1981) both deal with modern-day problems in the way the Middle East is discussed. As a highly engaged post-structuralist critic, Said clearly sees his role as one of demystification—picking up on forms of language, clichés of commentary and buried subtexts, then showing where they come from and how they operate. He has also been a vigilant critic of the canonization of 'great literature' in university courses, and the easy way that non-western works get pushed off into branches of Anthropology. An expert on Arabic literature, he also has a valuable familiarity with the philosophies and critiques of Derrida, Foucault, Bloom and Barthes which he has dealt with in *The World, the Text and the Critic (1983)*.

EdwardSaid was in New Delhi in December to deliver the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Lecture. He gave an exclusive interview for *The Book Review* to Professors Suvir Kaul (Jamia Millia Islamia), Ania Loomba and Neeladri Bhattacharya (Jawaharlal Nehru University), the text of which is published here.

Ania Loomba: We have decided to structure this conversation around three or four major issues, and then we will keep honing in . . . and what we thought we'd tell you by way of introduction is that some of these issues may seem either reductive or repetitive. But they tap into critiques of your work current in India. So instead of quoting names and mentioning people and particularities, we have actually consolidated a set of issues which are recurrent.

Edward Said: So who beginneth? . . .

Suvir Kaul: All right, this is our "beginnings." This is a quotation from *Orientalism*, which I am sure you will recognize: "My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period." Have you revised or rethought the conceptual frameworks suggested here?

Said: Perhaps I may have overdone the notion of how systematically—I mean to what extent, to what level of detail—the system operated. Maybe I overstated it. But that there was, to use Foucault's language, a kind of discursive regularity, I have no doubt. Second, I think, maybe what you are getting at is the common misunderstanding and misreading of that passage, which claims that I was saying at the same time that there was no answering voice, (to Ania) which I think was the question you asked yesterday.[1] That is not implied here at all. In fact, I say very

1. Said refers to the discussion after his talk at Jawaharlal Nehru University. The question asked was whether Said felt that critiques which accused him of leaving no conceptual space for the resistance and agency of colonized subjects were justified.

often that the question of the Other in this sense was irrelevant, and the example I love to give is the case of Gerard de Nerval who goes to visit Syria for his *Voyage en Orient* and immediately when you read the book—and if you know Syria—you realize that he is talking about some other place. You look a little further and you notice that what he is doing is simply repeating what Edward Lane says about Egypt. That is what I am talking about . . . there is a kind of occlusion, which by virtue of its authority, and by virtue of its successes, academic and artistic, gave Orientalism this kind of . . . persistence, you could call it.

AL: It is amazing how that misreading, as you call it, has persisted. But I want to shift the discussion slightly because it has been suggested by various recent critics that in postcolonial studies the emphasis is routinely on the analysis of colonial discourses instead of more material institutions, and often your own work, especially *Orientalism* (and this is ironic because everyone concedes that you are politically engaged and one of the few people who will talk about the material legacy of imperialism and colonial structures of authority) is seen as the source to which all these askew notions of discourse travel back to . . .

Said: No, but I make very clear in *Orientalism*—to the best of my ability to discuss it in a manageable frame—that none of this could have happened without institutions, for example. For instance, the influence and the importance of the French school of Orientalism founded by Silvestre de Sacy in France in the late teens: you know that most of the great German Orientalists studied with him and went back to Germany and established colleges of Oriental studies and so on and so forth . . . that is a persistent theme throughout the book. I also talk about the institutionalization of knowledge about the Orient as epitomized by the *Description de l'Égypte*.[2] And of course in the last part of the book (I am just jumping around now) I talk about the importance of this kind of knowledge to the State Department, to the Defence establishment, to the Intelligence establishment, and the connection between those and Anthropology, Political Science, "field work" and the construction of paradigms—it is all in there. Later, of course, and in other essays, I developed this more and quite specifically. When I addressed the Anthropological Association, I talked specifically about that relationship, and the constitutive problem of a science or a discipline like Anthropology ever escaping this founding moment, which is that ethnography was, in Lévi-Strauss's very famous phrase, "the handmaiden of colonialism." So I think it is a matter of emphasis . . . yes, perhaps if I were to do *Orientalism* again, I would have made it three times longer; spent more time talking about the importance of institutions. Perhaps this was part of my at that time and continuing divergence from Foucault, where I am interested in the individual author. Also it does seem to me that because of my literary training—I think if you read a book you are impressed with the voice and the tone and the habit and the style of the writer—I give more emphasis to that than I do to impersonal institutions, which later critics have taken up and have been perfectly willing and able to develop on their own.

AL: So do you think the field of postcolonial studies is subject to some of the same problems . . .

Said: I would rather not myself talk about it because I do not think I belong to that field. First of all I don't think colonialism is over, really . . . I don't know what they

2. Said refers to the twenty-three volume *Description de l'Égypte*, published between 1809 and 1828 by Napoleon's Institut d'Égypte.

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are really talking about. I mean colonialism in the formal sense is over, but I am very interested in neo-colonialism, I am very interested in the workings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and I have written about them. I care very much about the structures of dependency and impoverishment that exist, well certainly in this part of the world and my part of the world and in all parts in what is now referred to as the global South. So I think to use the word postcolonialism is really a misnomer and I think I referred to the problems of that term in the Afterword to *Orientalism*.

AL: I just wanted to finish this by saying that there is a whole debate about the literary emphasis of postcolonial studies or the genesis, the disciplinary home, from which it began. One of the unfortunate spillovers is that precisely those material details . . . you know what Arif Dirlik says . . .

Said: (intervenes) are left out. . . . Yes, I agree, I have quoted Arif Dirlik precisely for that reason . . .

AL: . . . yes, so would you think it is slightly unfair if everyone cites *Orientalism* as a post-structuralist text . . .

Said: Now listen, that is not even half as unfair as the way *Orientalism* is cited as a kind of a sacred text of [religious and cultural] fundamentalism. I mean that is the most difficult burden for me to shake. You know I publicly insult these people [fundamentalists] . . . I mean, in my part of the world. I will be very happy to do it here, but nobody gave me the chance. But . . .

SK: . . . you did reasonably when you talked about the weight of tradition in your speech at Jamia, it worked beautifully there . . .

Said: Yes, my main regret is not having said more about Rushdie there. But I did refer to him, I think at JNU. I wanted to at Jamia, but it just escaped my mind. I had just seen him in London and he is very upset . . . I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that he has been very wounded by all this and the fact that not enough people have spoken out, although Mushirul Hasan has. I knew about that. I don't know what the state of affairs here is now. I too suffer from my books being banned, *Culture and Imperialism* has just been banned in the entire Gulf . . .

AL: Really ? . . .

Said: Yes, absolutely. I mean the Arabic translation. I suppose the English version is allowed, but the Arabic translation has been banned from all the countries of the Gulf. I am very opposed to that . . . the idea of banning books is so primitive and so inimical to everything I believe; and to think that in some way my book licenses these characters [fundamentalists] to fulminate against something called the West, which is a position I abjure. I say even the notions of the Occident and the Orient are ideological fictions and we should try to get away from them as much as possible. And then people say, "well, your 'identity'" . I remember. . . (I am getting excited now) . . . I remember this past summer in Beirut there was a conference held . . . to honour me . . . in the Arab world, and one of the big discussions was my attack in *Culture and Imperialism* on "identity." "Identity" bores me, I am simply not interested in defending "identity." I mean . . . Palestinian identity, or in the case of something about to be exterminated or where there is political oppression, then of course I will defend against that. But the idea of defending the notion of identity as a kind of . . . how shall I put it . . .

AL: . . . essential . . .

Said: . . . essential, as a kind of necessary thing, and that we—this may not at all be true in India—but that we as Arabs need to defend our identity against the onslaughts of the West, I believe this is complete nonsense.

SK: No. There are versions of that claim offered here on almost exactly those terms.

Said : Yes, of course. I have great difficulty with those kinds of reductions, you know but . . .

Neeladri Bhattacharya: To continue with the question of Orientalism: in *Orientalism* you suggested two alternative structures of Orientalism. One, which seeks to appropriate and represent the Orient in scientific ways, codifying and recording the Orient objectively and from a distance, and the other which seeks to commune with the Orient, voyage to the Orient, and in some way exoticise the Orient. Yet we find that in most criticisms of your book there is a recurrent claim that you have seen only the consolidation of a homogenous Orient, the crystallization of a Orientalist vision which is homogenous and has a unitary essence. Would you

agree with the criticism and if not, if you were rewriting the book today, would you look at the fractures within Orientalist ideology in other ways?

Said: Yes . . . though not to the extent that is done by some postcolonialist theorists, that is to say, you look at the structures of anxiety and suspicion and narcissism and all these other things that suggest a kind of deep fracture within the Orientalist gaze during the period of high imperialism. I mean, both in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, these facts are to me unassailable: you know if you are a white man in the South or in the Tropics or in the East, that is a very powerful thing. There is no way of saying that you are overcome by fear or suspicion and all the rest of it or that you are anxious . . . you know, Homi Bhabha's elaborations of that just don't speak to me. I don't think they are that important because the other is much more important. Now as to the business of the homogeneity . . . I am not sure which one you mean, the homogeneity of the Orient or the homogeneity of the Orientalist?

NB: The homogeneity of the imperial conception of the Orient.

Said: Well if it was homogenous, I wouldn't have spent so many pages talking about it and giving, adducing, so many examples. The point is that it is not homogenous, but it is possible that as Chomsky has shown in, you know, in his work on syntactic structures that you can devise a fantastically complicated structure, endlessly variant, out of a very small number of elements. I think this is the case with Orientalism . . . I think there is a kind of deep structure of Orientalism which is able to multiply and proliferate in all kinds of ways. But I liked the way you drew attention to the fact that there is a difference between . . . you might call it the administrative and magisterial, like James Mill for example in *The History of India*, versus let's say Flaubert, where there are all kinds of other things . . .

NB: . . . Or Lane versus Chateaubriand . . .

Said: . . . or Lane versus Chateaubriand, although Lane also has interesting moments. There wasn't time to go into every fluctuation in the text, but later scholars have done that and found you could define a structure. But I think that they all depart from the same premise, that there is a line separating 'us' from 'them'. And it keeps recurring . . . I mean look at this, what's his name, that Huntington—*The Clash Of Civilizations* book . . . it has reemerged and its been there all along, I mean, for hundreds of years. That doesn't mean its the same, you understand, but it can be reappropriated. I come back to a model I referred to in *Culture and Imperialism*, namely counterpoint, where you have one line, a *canto fermo*, a sort of base line, and in the case of a composer like Bach he can devise the most complex contrapuntal structures . . . but that doesn't diminish the fact that the Goldberg variations are based on a very simple descending motif in the bass.

NB: You made a distinction between latent Orientalism and explicit Orientalism; the latent is a constant, whereas the explicit is . . .

Said: (intervenes) . . . or implied in some way . . . constant, well I am not sure if that is the word I would use . . . I like the word latent for that reason. I mean it may be in abatement, there are certain moments it is less and more at others . . .

NB: . . . but the latent is more shared amongst everybody, whereas in the explicit there are shifts and there are changes in styles and narratives . . .

Said: . . . yes, exactly, and there are changes in styles and in modes of writing, modes of discursive distribution and reproduction.

AL: There is a related question to all of this: there are different models of colonial

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relations which are now circulating, and it is curious that both the people who have criticized you from within colonial discourse studies—you have mentioned Bhabha, who says that the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized is far more interactive . . .

Said: (interrupts) . . . I say that too, actually.

AL: Well, *I* think you do. But what I am going to come to . . .

Said: . . . excuse me, I say that explicitly in *Culture and Imperialism*, which is why I wrote it.

AL: But amongst social historians . . .

SK: But that [*Culture and Imperialism*] is taken to be the text in which you rewrite some conceptual problems from your earlier work . . .

Said: . . . well, I don't know about conceptual problems, but I expand the notion . . . in other words, what I said specifically in the Introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*—although I didn't say that I should have done it in *Orientalism*—is that I didn't pay enough attention to other regions of the world. . . . And because of the time—look, I mean, I wrote *Orientalism* in 1975, and there was nothing available, really. . . there were a few essays here and there. Panikkar's book *Asia and Western Dominance* was one of the few books that I had cited, but otherwise, there was nothing really. I was attempting something for the first time, on a relatively open field as it were. Second, I thought that the notion of interaction precisely played an important role, which I now [in *Culture and Civilisation*] wanted to look at, which didn't mean I needed to look at it in *Orientalism* because I was talking of something quite different.

AL : I am going to push this a little bit because the question I asked you two days ago was really about agency and resistance, and that is a slightly different question. . . . People have argued that even in *Culture and Imperialism* you look at domination and then you look at resistance, whereas someone like Megan Vaughan working out of African materials, and a lot of people working out of Indian materials, say that the problem is not a question of simply domination and then resistance, but that, as Vaughan puts it, customs and traditions were created out of face-to-face encounters of colonizer and colonized. She specifically says that this is something you don't do and she then goes on to say that older models of writing social history were actually far better in a way for understanding the nature of colonial power than a kind of Foucaultian emphasis, which again she sees—though I must say, she is quite fair to you in some ways because she says that you are interested in the question of resistance—as a contradiction in your work, because the method you imply is not that of the actual interaction. So it is not domination versus resistance, but how do you understand their imbrication. I would like you to spell this out.

Said: Well I don't disagree with that . . . I suppose what the problem is, is how do you stylistically get around the problem of representing an interaction, which has to be represented as . . . I mean, in your own prose . . . as basically sequential. I mean it is a going back and forth, but that is still a sequence . . . its not getting away from the sequence . . . there wouldn't have been resistance had there not been colonial incursion, right? So to say that domination and resistance continue is to say what I think is a commonplace. Obviously they continue and they are implied in each other. There has been far more work developed along these lines . . . you know Terence Ranger has done a huge amount of work on primary and secondary anti-colonial resistance. But the question is how do you . . . how is it best described? I think we probably would agree on the fact that it takes place from the moment the white man sets foot somewhere . . . that he is immediately resisted, I mean, I don't think we have any doubt about that. The question is what is the best way to represent that in a posthumous prose, if you see what I am trying to say. There are diffferent ways of doing it and I find that analytically, the way I did it in *Culture and Imperialism* is . . . how should I put it . . . more convincing, more analytically clear and in the end probably more certain of what it is doing. I find most of the other things that have been written in this style including Homi Bhabha's—Homi is a friend, I like him—but I mean it is unreadable . . . let's put it that way.

AL: That it is.

NB: I am continuing the same question. There are two related issues: one is how do you bring in resistance in *Culture and Imperialism* and the other is, how is the question of resistance best incorporated in an argument. When I read *Culture and Imperialism*, I felt that you have a temporal argument there—in the way you present it—that first there is a phase of consolidation of empire, consolidation of an Orientalist vision through the writing of novels and other discursive processes, etc., and then there is a process of anti-colonial struggle when this vision is contested and questioned. Most of your evidence of contestation shows a twentieth-century questioning of the colonizer . . . now I felt that creates a problem . .

Said: . . . no that is not entirely correct. If I might interrupt you . . . I talk very specifically for instance about the response to Napoleon's invasion by Abd-al-Rahman al-Jabarti, that is simultaneous, that is contemporary with Napoleon. So there are examples like that, but I don't think it is always necessary to give examples at the same time because then it becomes very cumbersome . . .

NB: . . . no, I am not talking about that kind of resistance . . . there obviously has been resistance. What we are bothered about in History is to see how specific forms of contestation lead to the restructuring and refiguration of ideology, of colonial ideology. There I felt that your evidence has problems. For instance, you cite Guha's *A Rule of Property for Bengal* approvingly as an instance of empire writing back. But Guha's conception of ideology in that book conforms to your earlier model for the study of Orientalism. Guha argues that western ideas, physiocratic and mercantilist, shaped policies in India, whereas subsequent historical work suggests that is not the case, and that ideas were refigured through contestation and questioning and the local situation . . . and that is really the question. If that is occurring then what is the power of ideology to structure colonial society? Does it not also get refigured in the act of domination?

Said: Yes, in a chapter on the consolidation of the imperial vision, I tried to describe changes that take place—to go back to the question of the novel—to ask: what is the difference between, say, reading a few pages of Jane Austen and then reading a few pages of Kipling or of Conrad? The imperial vision is much more explicit, there is much more ready and available "content" in that respect . . . this is extremely striking, as is the contrast between one period and another. But what you are talking about is something that has to do with I think a more, how shall I put it, a more minute or more detailed interaction between ideology and resistance. Is that right?

AL: Actually, could I rephrase that because it need not even be resistance. I think if you think of it as just "power" and "resistance" then possibly what you are saying is correct, that actually it is impossible to represent either unless you keep them separate. I think that some social historians suggest that colonial authority consolidates itself, indeed articulates itself, by resonating dynamically with what it encounters, whether that is resistance, or earlier structures of power. Or it might be indeed what Terence Ranger talks about, that the creation of the idea of the "tribe" is with local participation, so it is that element of dynamism . . .

NB: (intervenes) . . . and dialogue. There is continuous dialogue, where people are not necessarily resisting, but for instance you depend on local informants for knowledge and their information is actually structured through traditional categories and notions of local people, so their ideas get inscribed in . . .

Said: (intervenes) . . . yes, that's extremely interesting, but that wasn't my subject. I can see how extremely important that is for social historians but I was talking in particular about a domain I call culture, where culture is, according to my definition of it, a realm that is—let us say like Orientalism—relatively impervious to *that* kind of dialogue, or *that* kind of interaction. Now there is of course a sub-cultural tradition, for example, as Guha and others have shown, a whole range of colonial writing which is not artistic but is administrative, is investigative, is reportorial, has to do with conditions on the ground, has to do with interactions depending on the native informant . . . all that exists, there's no question about that. I was trying to adumbrate, perhaps a less important, but to my way of thinking, a larger picture of a certain kind of stability which, because of my education, because of my training, has impressed me. Why is it so stable, why does it shake off the kinds of things you are talking about or why does it seem to succeed? Maybe I am wrong, maybe it doesn't, but I think I am not wrong. And why does it seem to hand itself on as "the culture" quite without regard for all kinds of experiences, from horror to interaction, which are somehow excluded from it. Camus is a perfect example. For there's a long history, which he incorporates in some of his prose writings, I mean non-fictional prose, which he deliberately leaves out of *L'Étranger* . . . you know, the life of a lower-middle class *colon* in Algeria who is outraged at the treatment of Algerians like himself and Arabs and Muslims by the French colonial system. But that is left out entirely in this particular vision, and I am really talking about vision in the end, more than I am about policies and working methods of the kind that you're talking about.

SK: Part of the problem with your concern with what you just described as the, and I like that word, "vision" of imperialism is that it [has] opened you up to the kind

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of critique that Michael Sprinker (who I believe you know well) . . .

Said: . . . he is my student . . .

SK: . . . well he says that in *Culture and Imperialism* you lavish a great deal of hermeneutical attention to the explication of metropolitan artists like Conrad, Kipling, Austen or indeed when you do an allegoric reading of Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, as opposed to the moments in the text when you consider Ngugi, Césaire and Achebe, who come across—in Sprinker's terms—in a "comparatively straightforward analysis." He suggests that in doing so, you valorize that kind of metropolitan culture and its aesthetic achievements, as opposed to a flattened understanding of what exists at the other end. How does your sense of your emphasis on imperial vision work with your reading of these different texts?

Said: Well look, there is also the fact that you're writing, or at least one is writing, a *book*, something one wants to be read; one isn't writing a didactic manual, one isn't writing a workbook for future students like Michael Sprinker who want everything spelt out! And of course I was writing for a largely metropolitan audience, I was not being published by a local Arab press . . . I was writing for a commercial press in the United States where one wants to get the largest number of readers. I think what he says is really a trivial observation . . . I don't think it has much interest. But of course, your question of the "valorization" of one or the other . . . first of all I never use a word like valorization! But I mean, to think that one is better than the other is inimical to my argument. I never said that. But I am not trying to describe the same thing in both texts, you see, and they try to do different things. And the nature of my subject—perhaps it's a mistake on my part to have made that assumption—is that I was trying to show a wide range of quite dramatically different, impressive responses from Césaire to C. L. R. James to George Antonios to Guha to Ngugi to Naipaul—a lot of writers—and to go through each of them painstakingly in a book that was already far too long . . . actually the book was cut, precisely on that point because I had a huge amount of stuff. Of course in the end they can't cut you unless you agree and I agreed. It seemed to make editorial sense, that rather than go through with the same process in each case it would have been better to telescope it and telegraph it, so it was an exigency of sorts.

AL: So what particularly was cut?

Said: I can't remember . . . I wrote it ten years ago. I started writing different versions of *Culture and Imperialism* immediately after *Orientalism*. So I had a lot on the African novel, on various Arab writers and Caribbean writers, a lot on George Lamming, that was all taken out, a lot on Wilson Harris; so, it was just a matter of emphasis and expectations vis-a-vis my audience. It's very difficult to write for twenty-five audiences. As it is I write for too many, because I am conscious also of my Arab reader . . . it is not always possible to keep in mind the Indian reader and the Chinese reader and the Japanese reader and so on and so forth! Those are all, you know, problems, which I frankly confess I simply can't deal with. But I think the main lines of what I was saying, I stand by.

SK: If we can shift tack a little to slightly more theoretical questions: various forms of post–structuralist enquiry have argued for the political necessity of giving up the "grand narratives" of historical explanation in favour of a more nuanced understanding of local hierarchies of power, etc. Such skepticism asks us to decouple our analysis of, for instance, capitalism and colonialism, which have often been understood and interlinked (that is, one couldn't have taken the form that it did without the other), or indeed to give up a "world systems" approach. Do you have a . . .

Said: (interrupts) . . . I have a very strong critique of the world systems approach, in an essay I wrote, I can't remember, about fifteen years ago. It will be published in a collection of my essays which is going to appear in a year or so when I have the time to put it together and write a preface for it. There I spoke about the problems of a world systems approach, which is that most of the work they have done, and I am speaking of Perry Anderson here, or even Samir Amin, depends very heavily on what I consider to be Orientalist sources. I mean, who is the major authority that they cite for example on the emergence of the Ottomans—it is Bernard Lewis. I give a lot of such examples. So, in that sense, I find it flawed. It doesn't take enough account of local scholarship or what you might call new knowledge of that kind . . . not that I have it. . . . I mean what are we talking about if I have to depend upon this kind of thing ["Orientalist sources"] to understand. There is, therefore, a kind of lack of understanding. I remember having used the example of Alatas's book, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*—it is an extremely important book, because there he looks very carefully at precisely the kinds of figures, estimates, trends cited by colonial economists, which they [world systems theorists] rely on, and over which there's a lot of disputation. Also, for instance, it was taken to be the case that capitalism was entirely a western, European invention, and that in Islam capitalism really never had a local base. There has now been some very interesting work by economic historians of a younger sort, anti-orientalist historians like Peter Graham, who shows that in Egypt, 17th and 18th century Egypt, there was the emergence of a local capitalism which was quite powerful and which has really never been studied as such . . .

SK: . . . versions of that argument have been made about India . . .

Said: . . . I'm sure . . . so the "world system" approach, yes, but with a kind of skepticism about the data that one is using—some of it of the kind that you have expressed and some of it expressed by the critique I get. Such data is always challengeable and one has to be careful about what one is using and what one is not using. But in the end, if one is attempting a global perspective, one then falls into the trap, but at least one is aware of it . . . .

AL: I was going to say that this has been a big debate around Subaltern Studies as well, they are doing all these local things, they are writing post–foundational history rather than thinking about capitalism, etc. But I was going to ask you about a slightly different version of this debate, which is that in *The World, the Text and the Critic* you have said that you find the Foucaultian understanding of power not sufficient for a politically engaged criticism and now . . .

Said: (intervenes) . . . I wrote something beyond that . . . I have written a couple of things on Foucault that appeared shortly after his death. I called one "Foucault and the Imagination of Power." It appears in a collection by David Hoy called *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. What I say is basically that Foucault writes always from the point of view of power, there's never any doubt in your mind when you pick up one of his books that power is going to win out in the end. So that the whole idea of resistance is really essentially defeated from the start. Poulantzas says the same thing, that the sites of resistance in Foucault are very difficult to follow.

AL: And Stuart Hall says that Foucault doesn't have any understanding of a system. That's the problem. But this idea that this Foucaultian notion of the dispersal of power is incompatible with Gramsci's notions of hegemony and power . . . at JNU, you rightly said that you believe you can combine critical methods and that there is no necessary contradiction. Now some people have offered a critique of Subaltern Studies saying that if you try and combine Foucault and Gramsci, it's like trying to ride two horses at the same time. And Gyan Prakash answers by saying then we all need to become stunt riders!

Said: . . . I was just thinking of Charlton Heston!

AL: I wanted to ask you to comment in a little more detail on what you think is the potential of such combinations. . . is this a productive tension at all between Foucault and Gramsci?

Said: . . . extremely productive. . . . Well look, one of the problems with Gramsci (having been a very, very assiduous student of Gramsci for many years—I was the first to lecture on Gramsci at Columbia about twenty years ago), is the state of the texts. When you talk about Gramsci, you are talking about something that is extremely slippery. When I gave a series of lectures on Gramsci (which I recall very vividly) and I think this is still the case, I felt that it was necessary to do a kind of philological analysis of the different ways in which he uses the word "hegemony," for instance, or the different ways in which he uses the word "intellectual." All the key words—"war of position," "war of manouvre," and others—are constantly shifting and constantly changing because of the way in which he wrote and because of the condition of his notebooks. Most of the readers of Gramsci have read him only in that one volume compendium, which is full of mistakes, by the way. I have corrected some, I don't know whether you know this, but there are passages in it which I quote in *Orientalism*, in a footnote I believe (I can't remember now, it's a long time ago) . . . but the four volumes of *The Prison Notebooks* had just come in the middle 70s, and I noticed that what they [Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith] had the tendency to do was to lop off bits of Gramsci. For instance in that passage that I quote: ". . . history is deposited as an infinity of traces in you without leaving an inventory." That's what you get in the book. But Gramsci goes on to say (and I put it in there) that therefore it is necessary to make an inventory, which is quite a different thing than to say that it leaves us with an infinity of traces without an inventory. And therefore, of course, you have to start by making an inventory. So that problem is very strong. Once you've begun to circulate a bit in Gramsci, you realize that he is talking about very different situations at very

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different times, and that there is a danger of abstracting from the situation to a general theoretical term . . . which is almost impossible, I mean the danger is almost too great. Nevertheless, Gramsci, unlike Foucault, is working with an evolving political situation in which certain extremely important and radical experiments were taking place in the Turin factories in which he was involved, and from them he generalized periodically, I mean in periodical form. You don't get that sense in Foucault; what you get instead is a sense of teleology where everything is tending toward the same end, and so the attempt to bring the two together involves in a certain sense breaking up the Foucaultian narrative into a series of smaller situations where Gramsci's terminology can become useful and illuminating for analytical purposes. In other words if you are talking about, let us say, the state of the clinic or the prison at a certain moment, [you need to ask] what else do you need to know about the situation besides what those people have written about it? What is the condition of factory workers at the time or what was the condition of convicts at that time, what class do they come from, what type . . . that's never been referred to in that book on the prison . . . what type of people are put into prison? In that sense, the introduction of historical, what I would call a historical context, to Foucault is extremely important and worth doing.

AL: And then it becomes possible to negotiate some of the larger tensions of ideological orientation . . .

Said: . . . Yes, . . . but what is ideological? There is a big difference with Gramsci, you see, who is always trying to change the political situation.

AL: That's what I meant.

Said: Foucault isn't. Foucault is really not interested in that. I mean there was a little period in the '60s to the middle '70s when he was very interested in the condition of prisoners and so forth, but by the time he came to America in the late . . . I think it was in the late '60s for the first time, but he came consistently during the '70s, he had changed and he was really not interested in the social movements at all and I think that is clear in his work. I am much more interested in that aspect of Gramsci; in other words how do you modify a political situation by organization and so on, all of which begin—since I am writing at a very restricted level—as Gramsci says, with trying to take stock of the situation. You sit down and work it out, the way he did on the Southern question, which is the only systematic analysis he ever did. So I find myself in that position, which is not the position Foucault found himself in. And from that, because of my political writing, which is enormous in volume, I am always trying to gear my writing not towards the theoretical constituency but towards a political constituency.

SK: This may be the time to switch to our last rubric: I had said that some forms of post–structuralist enquiry have asked us to give up on—as a political necessity—grand narratives . . .

Said: . . . you mean Chantal Mouffe and Laclau . . .

SK: . . . yes, exactly . . . that is the model . . .

Said: . . . I have no time for that. That's the answer to that question. What does it mean . . . and Baudrillard . . . it's just nauseating, it's just gobbledygook. No, Laclau is a serious man, I don't mean that. Both Baudrillard, and what's the name of that other guy . . . Lyotard . . . it's a kind of provincial atavism of a very very unappealing sort, and I feel the same way about post-modernism. I think it's the bane of Third World intellectuals, if you will pardon the expression . . . I'm not acccusing you, of course, present company excluded!

NB: Again, carrying on from the earlier question about productive tensions and opposite frames: I felt, when reading your books as well as hearing you lecture, that there is a strong tension or opposition between two kinds of frames in your writing. One is what is often identified as a constructionist frame, in which you see nation as a narration, you see the Orient as a narrative, and the imperial idea as a discursive product etc.; on the other hand there is also the recurring objectivist emphasis which you have in all your work on fact, on reality, on objective events, etc. I was wondering . . . it is not that these two cannot be reconciled . . . but how do you reconcile these two conceptual frames?

Said: I don't think they can be reconciled. I think the relationship is frequently... in my experience (and I am coming increasingly to that view) . . . there's a sense in which the relationship between one and the other is a relation of distortion and manipulation. Now we are perfectly ready to accept that when Harold Bloom talks about a poet misreading another poet. We are perfectly willing to accept it in the case of a novelist misrepresenting or misreading or misinterpreting reality in order to produce a fiction. But we tend sometimes to find it just as acceptable (and this is one of the great problems with post-modernism) to say "well, the media always lies, we know that," and to say that we know that representations are always just representations. My interest is in the more pernicious forms of these relationships, where actual lives, actual identities, actual political destinies are distorted and destroyed by a process of this sort. That's why I think the relationship between the "constructionist" and the other one ["objectivist"] increasingly is in my view irreconcilable. It is reconcilable in a way, but for my purposes it's always been something to be profoundly suspicious of . . . the relationship between the two . . . perhaps I am not answering your question?

NB: No, I had a feeling that in your own writing you are drawing from both.

Said: Of course, I am drawing from both.

NB: And you want to retain that opposition between them ?

Said: Yes, I do.

SK: These last two sets of questions have to do with the other important part of your life, which is your role as a public intellectual, your ideas and your performance. You have argued for, and your own career has demonstrated, the need for the public intellectual to work alongside larger collectivities and causes (and this is the Gramscian notion of the organic intellectual). But in recent years, and this too has been paralleled in your own life, you have talked at great length about independence and of the importance for intellectuals to resist the seduction of office and power. Is this a shift in your understanding of the role of a public intellectual or is this to be explained with reference to the peculiar circumstances of the Oslo agreement and the Palestinian–Israeli accord?

Said: No, I think it's a development, because I was always close to political power in one way or another, by virtue of my education, by virtue of my class, by virtue of my political involvement. I am not going to waste your time by trying to explain that, except to tell you that's the case . . .

SK: . . . we understand that in India . . .

Said: Exactly. But what I found increasingly important to me was independence . . . and of course this caused a tremendous debate when the Arabic version of *Representation of the Intellectual* came out, because a word which means "not committed" in Arabic was substituted for the phrase "independent intellectual," and I don't mean it that way. In other words, what I find is that if one is close to power, it takes an increasingly greater effort as one grows older to maintain that distance, and the cost is greater because you have to weigh the consequences, which are that if you did get involved maybe you could make things better, to put it bluntly. I made a choice which is not to do that, and to remain distant from it, and this was well before Oslo. It was all during my period of very close association with the PLO when I was on very close terms *with* them. And not only with them—it's an interesting part of now-forgotten history—but during the '70s the PLO in Beirut was the lodestone for every liberation movement in the world. When I went to South Africa in 1991, for example, when Mandela had just been released, I remember seeing him then, apartheid was still on, but the ANC was acknowledged and had their headquarters in the Shell building in downtown Johannesburg. One of the things that astonished me was how many faces were familiar to me. It was my first trip to South Africa, but many of them I had seen in Beirut or PLO Embassies elsewhere: Nicaraguans, Irish, various European liberation groups, but mostly third world liberation groups that I had come to know. So in that respect I was very close to all that and I knew what was happening in many instances, not *everything* that was happening, but a lot. The thing that impressed me the most was a paradox: on the one hand, in the case of a people who had suffered a great deal, like prisoners, or the spouses of prisoners who disappeared, I saw the importance of the party, of the organization, how it gave hope, how it sustained one, but it exacted a price from one, a price of submission, which was that you gave up a critical distance. And of course on the other side were those who were in power, who used that power in a certain sense to insulate themselves from their mistakes, and from the fact that there were things, particularly in the Palestinian case, that involved tremendous destruction. You couldn't have lived through the various Israeli invasions, or the bombings, or the seige of Beirut in 1982 . . . or I was in Amman during the Black September of 1970 . . . you can't have lived through that without realizing that you are to some extent responsible for that kind of damage, which produced nothing, only more suffering. So I always had the sneaking suspicion that if you were too close, and you accepted too much, the prerogatives of power, and the insulations of power, and the kind of . . . what my sister used to

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call quite brilliantly, a seat in the front row, you don't see what is going on behind you. Then, of course, it came to the fore, but my break with Arafat really occurred in 1988 or 1989. I did a public denunciation of him in the Arab press. Then there is the whole question of where you do it; in America where they are already attacked, it doesn't help me to attack him more, so I tried to confine myself mostly to writing in Arabic, which I still do. But then after Oslo, I felt that it was so disastrous, and the Gulf War, and the alliances and the whole tremendous . . . (his voice trails off). Now—to conclude—I have become in my late years, I suppose, partly because of my illness and partly because of other things, I have become very involved in a different view which is—you know, Adorno is very important to me now—the idea of trying to maintain a certain kind of tension without resolving it dialectically, as a sort of witness, a testimonial to what is happening . . . that seems to me to be something worth trying. You know, our situation as Palestinians, and, generally speaking, in the Arab world is so parlous, so desperate, that, *I* feel, perhaps hubristically, that it is important to maintain that distance and the voice. It gives me hope, when they ban my books and I am not allowed to go there and all that sort of thing, to see people reading me in faxes and e–mails and that's a possibility which I exploit. That means a lot to me. Logically, the next step would be to enter politics, because I could, and I am sure that I could spearhead a very serious political opposition to Arafat, but I am too ill to do it, I am too weak physically.

SK: And bearing witness is a powerful historical practice . . .

Said: Yes, it's something, but let's not exaggerate it . . . but it *is* worth doing, I think; anyway that is all I can do. I don't now have much activity unfortunately, but I place great hopes in my political activities which I now try to confine to the young. I try to see students, Arab students, throughout the world and I always speak to them, and that's important.

SK: Last question. This has to do with the whole notion of tradition and its weight that you talked about in your lecture at Jamia, which is of great consequence not simply within the confines of Jamia but in India generally. Now what you have been saying is that tradition has proved to be one of the biggest stumbling blocks in the achievement of democracy and human rights in many nations across the world. You have also talked about—you referred to Terence Ranger, for instance—the fact that tradition is always a motivated reinvention of the past to serve the interests of present-day power. Yet tradition is not only invoked by cultural and religious fundamentalists, but also by more secular communities concerned that they must resist the effects of modernization in so far as they understand modernization to be synonymous with American globalization, or consumer culture, or the media culture of the west. What is you sense of, how do you negotiate these . . .

Said: . . . I don't take any comfort in tradition. I think it's exaggerated and I think we know too much about its misuse. I very much admire analysts of tradition like Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, who had to leave Egypt because he did a discursive reading of the Quran and showed to what extent Islamic fundamentalist discourse was a discourse of power and not of vision or ethics as it pretends to be. For which they tried to make him divorce his wife, and he had to leave the country because he lives under a death threat. I think that kind of "us analyzing our traditions" is of the utmost importance. It's the most urgent thing we can do, and understand how traditions are live and not passive things stuck in a closet but they are—and I go back to Vico—made by human beings and that they are recollections, they are customary practices, collective memory, they are all kinds of things, but they are certainly not the simple pure thing to which people return and get comfort in. Maybe because I am so rootless myself and deracinated in that sense, I firmly believe that it is a tremendous mistake to give up to tradition as much is being given up to it, certainly in the Arab world. You know better about it in India.

AL: . . . here too, and quite dangerously . . .

Said: . . . is it the same? . . . yes, the BJP and so on . . .

राजकमल की साहित्य-यात्रा का 51वां गरिमामय वर्ष

और

कालजयी परंपरा के संग, नई सदी की ओर बढ़ता हमारा कारवाँ

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तेरहवें विश्व पुस्तक मेले में

राजकमल ने लेखकों/पाठकों के लिए अनेक योजनाएँ बनाई हैं :

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- आधुनिक समय के लिए प्रासंगिक विषयों पर मूल और अनुवाद योग्य पुस्तकों की योजना का सुझाव देनेवाले लेखकों/पाठकों को पुरस्कृत किया जाएगा।
- नए सत्र के हिंदी ऑनर्स और एम.ए. (हिंदी) परीक्षा में जिन छात्रों ने प्रथम श्रेणी प्राप्त की है वे अपनी मूल अंक तालिका साथ लाएँ और अपनी पसंद की एक सौ एक रुपए की पुस्तकें मुफ्त उपहार में प्राप्त करें।
- मेले के दौरान हमारी पुस्तक मित्र योजना की सदस्यता लेने वालों के लिए मौजूदा उपहार के अतिरिक्त उतने ही मूल्य का एक और उपहार।
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  - –नए लेखक/लेखिकाओं की संगोष्ठी
  - –रचना पाठ
  - –नई पुस्तकों का लोकार्पण
  - –आगामी प्रकाशन योजनाओं की सूचना

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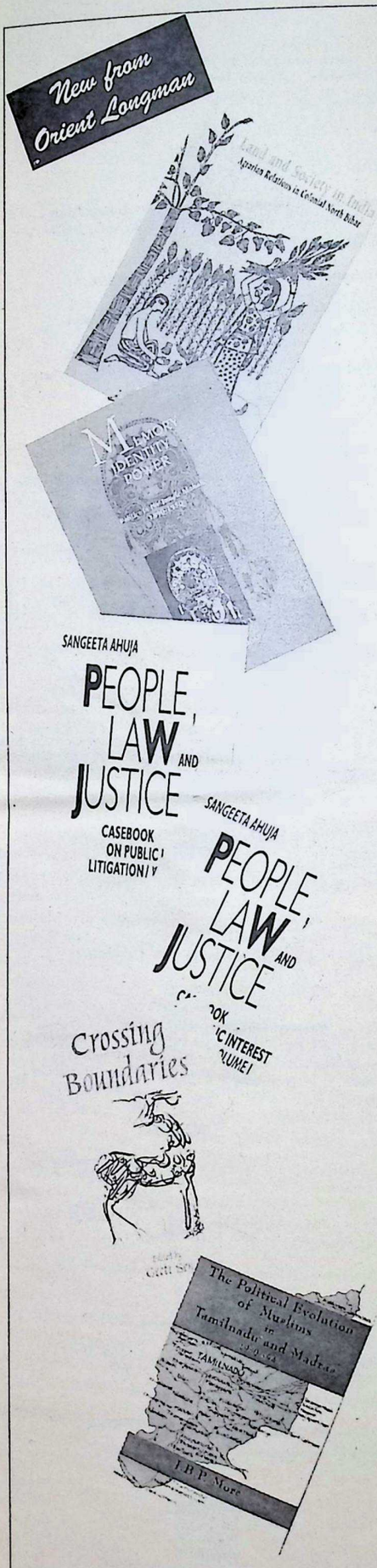

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Caste, Common Sense and Reservations

Satish Deshpande

THE POLITICS OF BACKWARDNESS: RESERVATION POLICY IN INDIA

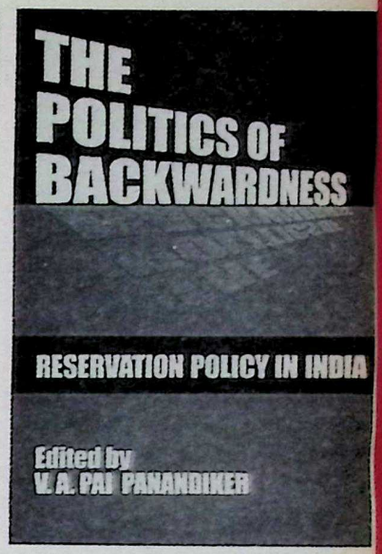
Edited by V.A. Pai Panandiker

Centre for Policy Research and Konark Publishers, 1997, New Delhi, pp. xii+338, Rs. 450.00

DISCRIMINATION WITH REASON? THE POLICY OF RESERVATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, INDIA AND MALAYSIA

By Devanesan Nesiah

Oxford University Press, 1997, New Delhi, pp. xi+334, Rs. 495.00



If "common sense" is an abbreviation for the transparent pane of prejudices, habits of thought, unexamined knowledge and ignorance through which we normally view the world, then "social science" would be an abbreviation for the abnormal gaze that tries to focus on both this pane as well as the world beyond it. Figuratively speaking, therefore, good social science must cultivate a sort of double vision—a squint.

On the whole, both the books under review seem reluctant to squint. They take a disappointingly straight-eyed view of reservation policies, being content, for the most part, to provide the sort of compendium of facts, figures and opinions that could have been collected by almost anyone—anyone with any common sense, as we say.

This would be a rather snobbish attitude to take in normal times, when every reasonably competent and informative book can be socially useful. But we live in decidedly abnormal times, when normal science and conventional methods seem to cast dark shadows on the very problems they are meant to illuminate, when the only way forward is through a process of ruthless unlearning and rethinking. This is particularly true of issues like reservation policy, or more generally, caste. What we desperately need from books on this subject, therefore, are insights rather than information. Neither of the books being reviewed meets this need in any substantial measure, though there are chapters and passages that will reward the painstaking reader.

Discriminating With Reason? (henceforth *Discrimination*), is authored by a recently-retired Secretary to the Government of Sri Lanka. Originally a doctoral dissertation in Public Administration submitted to Harvard University in 1989, it was revised for publication while the author was a Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Law School. However, the revisions don't seem to have gone far enough to prevent Devanesan Nesiah's blameless dissertation from turning into a bland book. This is a pity, because Nesiah writes well and is clearly a careful and able scholar.

We live in decidedly abnormal times, when normal science and conventional methods seem to cast dark shadows on the very problems they are meant to illuminate, when the only way forward is through a process of ruthless unlearning and rethinking. This is particularly true of issues like reservation policy, or more generally, caste. What we desperately need from books on this subject, therefore, are insights rather than information.

The problems of *Discrimination* begin with its inadequately conceptualized rationale for comparing the U.S.A., India and Malaysia. Two reasons are offered: first, a desire to look at formally institutionalized preferential policies in countries with varying socio-economic and administrative-legislative profiles (pp. 11–12); and second, that not much work exists on all three countries together, though there are plenty of studies comparing India and the United States (p. 266). If reservation policies are shaped by their socio-political context on the one hand and their underlying ethical-legal principles on the other, Nesiah's evenhandedness towards both makes his argument lose focus. Since contexts vary across the three countries, and, to a lesser extent, so do principles, it is not clear what a *general* comparison can accomplish. *Discrimination* ends up as a miscellany of interesting juxtapositions that are never pursued far enough for the important insights they might have yielded.

Thus, the introductory chapter ("Inequality and Discrimination") offers the following contrasts: unlike in the USA and India, the judiciary in Malaysia has been much less important than the legislature in initiating and regulating preferential policies, which benefit the politically dominant majority (Bumiputras), with special emphasis on enabling Bumiputra control of the private corporate sector. Although explicit public segregation of races and castes is legally banned in the USA and India, there is considerable room for *de facto* discrimination in both countries, especially in the private sector in India, which (unlike its US counterpart) is exempt from reservation laws applicable to the state sector. Preferential policies for women have been a major issue in the USA, whereas they are only beginning to be taken up in India, and are not even on the horizon in Malaysia (pp. 12–14).

So what do these points of similarity and difference teach us? Nesiah has not only "made no attempt to arrive at a single universally applicable conclusion"—a wise if obvious choice—but has also decided to allow "passages of comparative study [to] occur as and when" (p. 14) such areas are reached in the individual country studies that occupy the next six chapters (Chs. 2–7). This strategy backfires because it shifts most of the burden of justifying the study on to the final chapter (Ch. 8: "Findings and Recommendations"). Unfortunately, this crucial chapter wilts under the pressure, exposing the limitations and the unutilized potential of the book, both traceable to its inability to break free of the dissertation mould.

The vague and cliched recommendations (pp. 304–14) that emerge from such a study would hardly have surprised Nesiah the seasoned bureaucrat. It is unfortunate that Nesiah the scholar did not anticipate this, for then he would have rewritten his book, pushing harder on promising fronts while drastically pruning the literature-summaries that weigh down the dissertation. For example, the very different socio-political dynamics of reservations for "minorities" and "majorities" could have been explored more rigorously; or the role of context in determining the outcome of conflicts of principle between different types of reservation policies could have been analyzed in greater detail. In the event, *Discrimination* is not very original in what it does well (summarizing a familiar literature, especially for India and the United States), and too thinly spread in areas where it could have made a distinctive contribution. However, given the narrow focus that the issue has acquired here, Indian readers may find this book useful for its sustained attempt to situate reservations within the changing overall agenda of the post-colonial developmental state.

The Politics of Backwardness (henceforth *Politics*) grew out of a seminar at the Centre for Policy Research (Delhi), and consists of eleven papers edited and introduced by V.A. Pai Panandiker, an eminent policy analyst and Director of the Centre. The contributors are mostly academics or academic-administrators, along with two journalists and a lone lawyer. The chapters can be grouped under: generalia (the editor's introduction, Pran Chopra's overview, and the epilogue by B.G. Verghese); background papers (Shree Prakash's survey of Backward Caste reservations, and Suma Chitnis on the administrative-conceptual evolution of the Caste and Tribe Schedules); regional case studies (G. Thimmaiah on Karnataka, Sachchidananda on Bihar, Mohit Bhattacharya on West Bengal, and Shree Prakash on Gujarat); "alternative" (i.e., pro-reservation) viewpoints (the essays by D.L. Sheth and Ghanshyam Shah); and finally the postscript, a 71-page commentary on the Supreme Court's role in the Mandal controversy by Rajeev Dhavan, which is in a class of its own.

As a seminar volume, *Politics* misses out on the main comparative advantage of the genre, timeliness. The odour of obsolescence that pervades the volume is not adequately explained by the editor who merely states that "most of the

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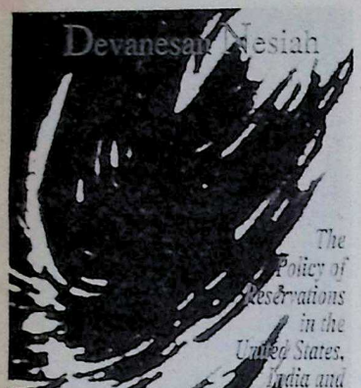

Rajeev Dhavan's monograph-length essay is clearly the one outstanding piece in the volume. Its penetrating cross-examination of the shifts in judicial discourse on reservations policy is well worth reading carefully. Among its many provocations to thought are an acute analysis of the consequences of Nehruvian ambivalence on caste, and a sober assessment of the methodology adopted by the Mandal Commission.

chapters of this volume were prepared around 1991" (p. 12). The worst affected are Shree Prakash's two essays (it seems that the overview of OBC reservations was written while the Mandal Commission report was still "under consideration" (p. 31), and the piece on Gujarat in 1987 (p. 216)), and G. Thimmaiah's case study of Karnataka (which appears to predate the important Chinappa Reddy Commission of 1989–90). If proper updating was infeasible, even a short headnote (specifying when each essay was written and outlining subsequent developments) would have worked wonders. Given the rapid developments around this issue in the last few years, *Politics* cannot escape seeming dated despite the inclusion of B.G. Verghese's "Epilogue" (which is too slight to make a difference), or even Rajeev Dhavan's insightful postscript (which has the effect of showing up most other contributions in a poor light).

If one overlooks the age of the essays and their unevenness, the background papers and the regional case studies provide some interesting information and references to earlier surveys and studies. Shree Prakash details the now familiar arguments on the significant internal differentiation within caste groupings like "forward" and "backward", and the extreme paucity of reliable data on which to base a rational reservation policy. Suma Chitnis points out that despite the apparent consensus on the meaning and scope of the schedules for severely disadvantaged castes and tribes, these remain ill-defined categories urgently in need of re-examination. G. Thimmaiah's essay shows that Karnataka's relative better data base has not prevented bitter acrimony around reservations; however, it is unfortunate that the essay is unable to consider the Third Backward Classes (Chinappa Reddy) Commission. Sachchidananda's piece on Bihar comes up with the startling information (p. 168) that a 1990 Scheduled Caste recruitment drive succeeded in *exceeding* reservation quotas in the service classes I, II and III! Since it runs counter to the performance of other states and the centre, where filling of SC/ST quotas has been particularly slow in the higher levels of the bureaucracy, this finding could have been discussed at greater length. Mohit Bhattacharya emphasizes the essentially political nature of reservations, and argues that the peculiar political ethos of West Bengal has prevented caste issues from dominating the public sphere.

Politics is saved from mediocrity mainly by the essays in the latter part of the collection. Though they clearly enjoy the advantage of writing at a later date, scholars like D.L. Sheth, Ghanshyam Shah and especially Rajeev Dhavan also seem to have tried harder to disentangle this issue from the common sense that it is embedded in. Thus, both Sheth and Shah remind us that reservations are as much about the *over-representation* of certain castes in privileged enclaves of the state sector as the under-representation of other castes. Though they are often less than precise in their arguments, both provide useful counter-examples within the argument-by-anecdote strategy that is commonly employed in discussions on this subject. But Rajeev Dhavan's monograph-length essay is clearly the one outstanding piece in the volume. Its penetrating cross-examination of the shifts in judicial discourse on reservations policy is well worth reading carefully. Among its many provocations to thought are an acute analysis of the consequences of Nehruvian ambivalence on caste, and a sober assessment of the methodology adopted by the Mandal Commission. The beneficial impact of this essay on the volume could have been maximised by shortening it and by building links with the rest of the essays; or it could have been used to stage a debate among the various chapters in the Introduction.

The social potency of common sense derives precisely from the fact that it not only includes at least part of the truth, but also cherished ideals and values. And no one is exempt from its effects; indeed, one could say that to live in society is to live in common sense: we can never step completely out of it.

While on the subject, one cannot avoid the embarrassment of having to mention that the editor's Introduction is the weakest part of *Politics*. (It is actually more a foreword than an introduction, especially since the latter role is better performed by Pran Chopra's Overview, which explicitly addresses the other chapters in the volume). Mere dereliction of editorial duty would not have mattered so much; what cannot be overlooked is the setting down—in cold print, on the pages of a scholarly volume—of thoughtless and unsubstantiated assertions. In fact, anyone wanting to understand the precise meaning of the term "common sense" as used in this review should read the Introduction carefully. If this sounds harsh, chew on the following examples:

> V.P. Singh's theory that reservations in the civil service are necessary to transfer power bristles with problems. Despite all the attacks on efficiency, the rot in the administration of the country coincides largely with the 1990s. There is a great deal of evidence that corruption and its twin inefficiency have reached untold heights since 1990. As norms of efficiency and integrity have been thrown to the winds, scams of massive magnitude have come to the fore (p. 5).

(Singh's theory may indeed "bristle"; but as every undergraduate in the social sciences ought to know, correlation-is-not-causation. The 1990s have certainly brought us scam fatigue, but where is the "great deal of evidence" that links this specifically to *lower caste ascendancy*? Where are "the reserved categories" in the Bofors, stock market, urea, or telecom scams? Even the credit for the famous fodder scam has had to be shared between Laloo Yadav and Jagannath Mishra.)

Or, in a different vein:

> The hypocrisy [of pro-reservation politicians] is often so great that when it comes to treating themselves for their heart ailments or cancer, these advocates of social justice have no hesitation in going to the United States of America often at the cost of the state. Nobody asks them that if reservations do not affect quality then why not insist on treatment by medical practitioners who are products of the reservation quota (p. 9).

(Politicians have been demonstrably hypocritical about everything including, say, development or national defence; does that mean we must dump our development or defence programmes? Is it because of reservation that rich Indians go abroad, or not-so rich Middle Easterners or Africans come to India, for medical treatment or higher education? Is there a contradiction between a) believing that qualified doctors who have benefitted from reservations are as good (or as bad) as other doctors; and b) wanting one's own doctor to be better than (and not merely as good as) other doctors?)

It is easy to forget, when reacting to the aggravations of the commonsensical style of non-argument, that common sense is not simply a fancy phrase for other people's errors, illusions or deceits. The social potency of common sense derives precisely from the fact that it not only includes at least part of the truth (the frequency of scams *has* increased, politicians *are* hypocrites), but also cherished ideals and values. And no one is exempt from its effects; indeed, one could say that to live in society is to live in common sense: we can never step completely out of it. But because common sense is not a single seamless monolith—every epoch, social group or specific context produces its own variety—it becomes possible to emerge from its shadow, albeit only partially and that too only with disciplined effort. The social sciences are (or should aspire to be) an institutionalised form of such efforts.

The common sense that collects around critical, long-standing institutions like caste is particularly resistant to analysis because it usually renders itself transparent. Though our images and impressions of caste are refracted through it, common sense itself remains

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invisible to us. Social scientists need to be doubly vigilant here because they must study not only caste itself but also the ways in which it has been studied—or not studied. It is unfortunate in this context that both *Politics* and *Discrimination* focus on reservation without sufficiently foregrounding the basic social problem it addresses—caste relations—and *the persepectives from which this problem has been approached.*

Thus, for example, both volumes repeatedly come up against the extreme paucity of reliable research on the concrete mechanics of caste discrimination, but don't pursue this curious phenomenon far enough. Why is there a severe and *continuing* shortage on this as compared to other subjects? What steps would be necessary to produce relevant data? Why are such steps not forthcoming? (Discussions on these questions would be particularly valuable today when the possibility of including caste as a category in the 2001 Census is being explored.) This systemic (rather than accidental) shortage of research is directly responsible for the lopsided distribution of emphasis in most arguments encountered in these volumes (and elsewhere) on the reservations question. Although underrepresentation of lower castes and overrepresentation of upper castes are two sides (albeit asymmetrical) of the same problem, there is very little attention paid to the latter side. A potentially fruitful alternative approach remains unexplored when we fail to ask: What are the concrete social mechanisms that have enabled the upper castes to maintain their dominance in the top jobs of the public, private and state sectors *even after caste distinctions were formally abolished in independent India*? Can these mechnisms be replicated among other caste groups?

In short, before we can conclusively debate solutions (such as reservations) we need to really understand the problem (caste inequality and discrimination). And to understand the problem, we have to engage in a disciplined effort to make visible and subject to scrutiny the layers of unexamined common sense that surround it. This in turn involves developing a self-reflective double vision that can keep one eye on the problem while using the other to examine how the first does its job. To borrow a phrase that describes a squint-eyed person in colloquial Bihari (among the richest of the many hybrid languages invented in contemporary India), good social science must always strive not only to "look London" but also to "see Paris".

Satish Deshpande is a sociologist at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi.

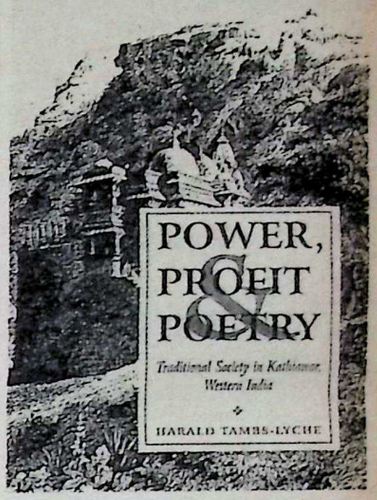
State Formation In Saurashtra

Amrita Shodhan

POWER, PROFIT AND POETRY: TRADITIONAL SOCIETY IN KATHIAWAR, WESTERN INDIA

By Harald Tambs-Lyche

Manohar Books, 1997, pp. 337, Rs. 450.00



Herald Tambs-Lyche has written on Saurashtra in a very Kathiawadi style—a history that is a mixture of fact and myth; tales of valour and miracles; communities and goddesses. His work is a modern parallel for Saurashtra, what God's *Annals* was for Rajasthan and Forbes' *Rasmala* was for Gujarat. Unlike the above two colonial writers, he does not claim to record the history of the region per se, or to introduce the region to us. Rather he aims to examine modern political agendas against a historical, cultural and social background.

The author's opening and closing statements lead one to the belief that he is interested in reviewing the highly popular and politically powerful notion of Ramrajya that has become current in the modern political party—the BJP. However the only connection between the modern notion of Ramrajya and the rest of the book is that the states and politics that he examines are those of Hindu kingdoms in the past and the modern mythological figures that belong to that period. There is no suggestion even that these kingdoms imagined themselves to be Ramrajyas. Nor is there a study of the BJP's notion of ideal Hindu governance or elements that constitute the ideal Hindu.

This work is a welcome addition to the literature on Saurashtra. Tambs-Lyche's references are exhaustive, ranging from anthropology, political economy, folklore studies to orientalist theories and colonial monographs on the history and culture of Kathiawar, besides his own anthropological fieldwork in the region. He thus provides a valuable survey of literature.

While it is problematic to set up the agenda thus without even a mention of what the BJP version of Ramrajya is, we can safely forget that this is the aim of the author as he doesn't mention it anywhere else in the book. My attention was caught, as I am myself interested in the right-wing and dangerous historical fabrications of this party. Tambs-Lyche's work provides considerable information on the sources and conditions of Rajput authority and rule in Saurashtra. As such it can be used by those interested in critiquing the BJP version of the ideal Hindu rule. However he falls far short of doing this and should accordingly moderate his claims.

The history and society of Saurashtra are very understudied. In that this work is a welcome addition to the literature on Saurashtra. Tambs-Lyche's references are exhaustive, rangit 3 from anthropology, political economy, folklore studies to orientalist theories and colonial monographs on the history and culture of Kathiawar, besides his own anthropological fieldwork in the region. He thus provides a valuable survey of literature.

The historical frame of the book is the story of state formation in Saurashtra. Thus the first three chapters deal with the decline of Ancient Saurashtra, the emergence of traditional society, Rajput state formation; and then the formation of nineteenth and twentieth century princely states under colonial governance. The various formations—lineages, chiefdoms, kingdoms are examined, categorized and differentiated. There is a careful delineation of historical developments with reference to Rajasthan, medieval Brahminic theories about kingship and the Vaishnava kingdoms and even developments in medieval Europe from feudal to bureaucratic states.

In this discussion what information is not available is filled in from myths in a rather simple manner. The myth is read not as a historical document but a social document—recording social relationships between groups and classes. Kathiawari polities are analysed very carefully as moving from Rajput chieftainships, clan and lineage based states to modern states where bureaucracy is more powerful than kinship networks. He suggests that if the British under Colonel Walker had not stepped in to make the settlements with the individual native states, the number of states would have been fewer in modern times as there was an indigenous process of state formation.

Within this frame of state formation the intervening chapters are anthropological sketches of the various castes and 'tribes' that populate Saurashtra today. These are studied for the way in which they are adapted into the society of Kathiawar and the material economy. These chapters provide a great review and sketch of modern Saurashtra's important groups—the darbars, kheduts, maldharis, charans, brahmins, banias.

They however leave out the dalit—the scheduled castes. This omission is not explained at all, though he mentions in several places how the 'harijans' are involved in state formation e.g. they apply the rajtilak to anoint the king. This omission is rather glaring as the scheduled castes do form an important section of modern society.

Another missing but very important and prominent figure in traditional Kathiawar politics, literature, myth is the figure of the outlaw—the baharvatiyo. Tambs-Lyche does mention how defeated chiefs become outlaws and discusses the bringing of peace to Kathiawar as a major feature of modernity—how then can he ignore these outlaws? However the latter are relegated to the background by the fact that the text deals with the 'states' of Saurashtra—Bhavanagar, Junagadh, and Jamnagar. Thus the outlaws are

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described only as 'buffers' between these major states. His narrative is detailed enough to show how many of the inter-state conflicts are begun by these very outlaws. The presence of such details tantalizes and begs greater analysis and formulation.

Another problem with the intervening "anthropological" chapters is that the links between the social groups and the state are quite inadequately explored. While the importance of the links are mentioned in the chapters on the state, in the chapters on the communities themselves we have a curiously "powerless" analysis in an anthropologically timeless manner—where the modern, the mythical and the medieval are synchronous. There is a strong sense that the castes and communities of Saurashtra have remained unchanged except for new 'adaptations' to economic circumstances taking up new professions.

This is very glaringly the case in the chapter on the Charans who were admittedly important as king-makers. We learn of their importance in the section on Rajput state formation. However in the chapter on Charans we have a traditional anthropological description of the Charans, their mythology and their economic adaptations and professions, but hardly anything about the way they function at courts and in making the state.

In an early section we are told that Charan women were associated with the goddesses as their incarnations on earth. Charan women are also supposed to be the intermediaries between the goddesses and the worshipper. However in the section on the Charans there are only the myths of the goddesses described as Charan women. There is no description of the charan women associated in any goddess rituals. The one ritual described is of the buffalo sacrifice, no women seem to play a part and the sacrificers are a Harijan and a Rajput and the one who drinks the sacrificial blood and is possessed by the goddess is a Charan male bhuva (p. 178). How is the claim to Charan women as intermediaries between worshipper and goddess to be sustained?

This example also points to another problem. While mythology is very important and is fittingly discussed, the accompanying and constituting rituals are not described. Thus, in traditional orientalist method, the mythology is seen as providing a story without being seen as constituting power.

In Chapter X "The King: Integration Through Power" discussing Inden's king-making ritual and theory the author does not describe the ritual for anointing the king in Saurashtra. He only describes how the latter differs from Inden's description of the Vishnupurana ritual and then concludes that there are differing theories of kingship. The regional differences are clearly specified—the kings in Kathiawar are not 'God-kings' nor Brahmanic, but we are still left unsure of what the Kathiawari theory of kingship is.

There is an unresolved paradigmatic mixture in Harald Tambs-Lyche's work. The project can hardly be fulfilled by means of the analysis utilized. There is a desire to do "Cultural Studies". He says, "WHAT I STUDY, THEN, IS THE PROCESS by which a referential object, 'traditional society' finds form" (p.316). The project thus stated is one of studying the development of a particular representation of traditional society in modern times. Yet, there is no analysis of what the modern conception of tradition is. At the same time there is an assumption that social groups remain essentially the same over centuries. The latter assumption permits the social history of the medieval Rajput state to be written in by modern anthropological studies.

I believe it is following Barth that fails the author for it does not provide him with an appropriate paradigm in which to view historical communities. Instead of viewing social formations as linked to their historical conditions he views them as ethnicities that remain essentially constant however much they may 'evolve' and adapt to their changing circumstances.

What has been achieved is a careful delineation of historical political conditions and their cultural superstructure—myth and religion, which provide the material for the modern cultural "discourse" of tradition. What he does not achieve is a study of the social conditions which led to such cultural formation—either of the medieval state or of the modern discourse.

Amrita Shodhan is a research scholar who has published on gender, community and society in nineteenth century western India.

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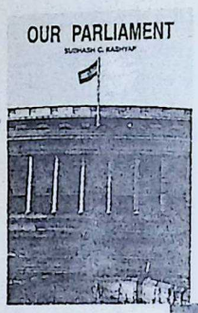

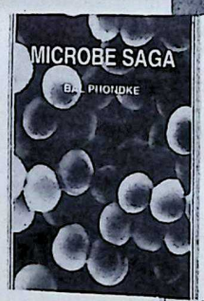

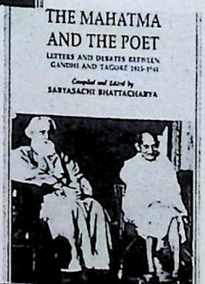

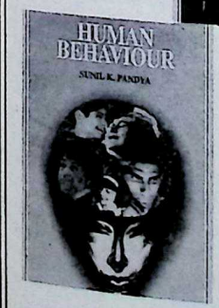

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A Holistic Understanding of a Temple

R. Champakalakshmi

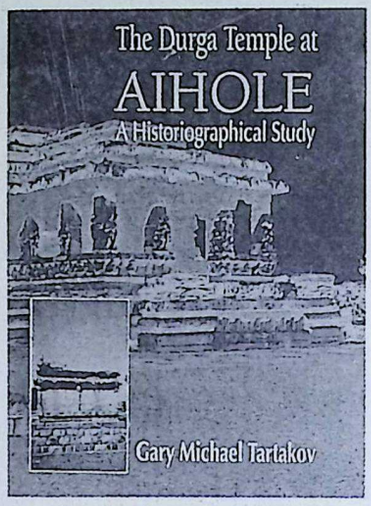
THE DURGA TEMPLE AT AIHOLE: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL STUDY
By Gary Michael Tartakov
Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 153, Rs. 495.00

Temples have their own histories. One pertains to their foundation and role in the historical processes in a region or a country in different periods. The other is the history of their discovery, the study of various aspects like their date, architecture, art and iconography from different ideological and methodological frames. The present book is about the latter i.e. the historiography of a particular temple, viz., the Durga temple at Aihole, admittedly a monument of great significance to antiquarians and historians of art since the nineteenth century. Gary Michael Tartakov, the author of the book, focuses both on the historical method used in the study of the temple and the history of the changing perspectives on its origin, date and architectural and aesthetic significance, adding his own first-hand understanding of the monument. The aim is to increase our understanding of the temple in its totality. The author succeeds in achieving this goal, albeit in a strictly chronological approach to the literature on the temple for over a century and a half. Tartakov emphasizes historiography as a means for better understanding and is quite aware of the distance that separates the creators of the project and the historians who study it, and the ways in which the latter construct the meanings of such monuments, the shifting perspectives and continuous reinterpretations and the need to do so due to changing and improving techniques of recording a monument.

Starting from the antiquarian literature of colonial India, (the photographs of Col. Biggs, the notes of Col. Meadows Taylor and James Fergusson), the author follows a chronological order to assess the writings of western and Indian scholars of the pre- and post-Independence era, demonstrating how second hand knowledge and dependence on the views of pioneering investigators have perpetuated incorrect understandings of the character and place of the Durga temple in Indian art history.

Starting from the antiquarian literature of colonial India, (the photographs of Col. Biggs, the notes of Col. Meadows Taylor and James Fergusson), the author follows a chronological order to assess the writings of western and Indian scholars of the pre-and post-Independence era, demonstrating how second hand knowledge and dependence on the views of pioneering investigators have perpetuated incorrect understandings of the character and place of the Durga temple in Indian art history. Tartakov points out, rightly, that the western Indian Buddhist caitya hall derivation for this early brahmanical temple, based on the apsidal plan of its shrine continued to be the most dominant among all but a few of the art historians working on the Aihole temples and other cognate temple sites, an interpretation nurtured and refined by generations and even influencing the dating of the temple in the 5th–6th centuries AD, as a brahmanical takeover of a structure more appropriate to the Buddhists. Fergusson, who was the first to propound this theory, persisted in this understanding of the temple's origin, despite better and improved surveys made by later scholars, including his own protégé, James Burgess.

Yet, with Fergusson also began the transition from the eclectic, amateur literature of the antiquarians to the systematic art history of later 19th and early 20th century. Fergusson ignored the brahmanical affiliations of the temple and its iconographic message, despite their being made available in other studies, especially that of Burgess and even followed a "racial-religious" style scheme (a Dravida leaning) which was just recast by Burgess. Henry Cousens, the third major interpreter, was better informed on the Chalukya temples, of which the Durga temple is a significant example, but did not move away from caitya hall origin. He introduced an evolutionary scheme from caves to structures, flat roofed to tower bearing structures, while explaining the tower of the temple, the most enigmatic of all the architectural features of the temple. The main deity of the temple, in the absence of the image in the sanctum, also proved to be enigmatic and Vishnu or Surya Narayana became the early choices due to the presence of a Garuda figure on the doorway.



A new phase began with an attempted synthesis from existing literature after World War I, when the temple came to be connected with the wider range of pan-Indian temple architecture. E.B. Havel labelled the temple as Aryan and brahmanical and hence worthy of western respect, but held on to the caitya hall derivation and assigned the temple to the Goddess (Durga). Placing the temple in the history of Indian art, even Ananda Coomaraswamy accepted the same derivation. Percy Brown, whose works on Indian architecture are still considered basic to the study of art history in India, merely elaborated the caitya derivation and assigned the temple to AD 500. But with Stella Kramrisch came new and more developed understandings, and textual basis for the apsidal plan for a brahmanical temple was found in the *Samarangana Sutradhara* (the *Hastajatiya*).

Dependence on second hand literature and earlier writings dominated most works on Aihole such as those of O.C. Gangoly, George Moraes, Gurudas Sarkar, A.V. Naik, Herman Goetz and even Benjamin Rowland, a most prolific writer on Indian art. They were also marked by the use of Greek temple and Church terminology in the description of the temple, such as its basilical plan, nave, aisles and clerestory for the inner hall and shrine. It also became important to trace various elements to outside sources, such as 'Gupta type', 'Ajanta type pillar', the flying Vidyadhara figures as 'the Nayads and Tritons of Hellenistic typology dressed up in Indian costumes. The post-independence years ushered in two approaches. One was commercial literature on aesthetics with photographs of mithuna couples, flying Vidyadharas, aesthetically pleasing feminine figures adding to the visual impression of the temple. The other was by more serious scholars like J.N. Banerjea, who confined his study to the iconography and identification of the images, while C. Sivaramamurthi used traditional Sanskrit literature and terminology to explain the figures and the *Ramayana* frieze in the temple. Yet they were still trapped by the mistaken list of deities made by James Burgess.

Indian specialists in search of a more critical grasp of the temple and its place in Indian art, made reappraisals of the temple's layout, sought parallels in other sites like Ter in Maharashtra and Chezarla in Andhra, looked for examples from the brahmanical architecture of Nagarjunakonda in Andhra and Sonkh near Mathura for an apsidal form in the pre-5th century period. But the Buddhist formula persisted although it was claimed that it was functionally unsuitable to a brahmanical ritual requirements. Increasingly now, the tower was claimed to be either experimental (Krishna Deva) or a later addition, thereby the dating of the temple as a unified whole could not be achieved. More importantly, the Agamas and Sastras were brought to the fore explaining the *apse* and the tower. Other apsidal brahmanical temples were located in Andhra and Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu in structural and rock-cut styles. The most notable of the textual authorities were P.K. Acharya, N.V. Mallaya and Stella Kramrisch.

A more complete image of the Durga temple emerged in the second century of its study through specialists like R.S. Gupte, somewhat less bound by previous literature, K.V. Soundararajan, Aschwin Lippe, James Harle, the first thorough re-evaluation coming from George Michell in his *Early Western Chalukya Temples*, with carefully made plans and diagrams and comparative study of temples at Badami, Mahakuta and Pattadakal. Much of what Tartakov has to say about the temple is based on Michell's comprehensive analysis and illustrations, but with greater precision and an integrated approach to all the aspects of the temple's art, architecture

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Comparative analysis of various temples is his second methodological frame to study the layout, design and iconographic programme of the temples in Aihole and outside. Inscriptions correlated with layout and design help in his dating of the temple, along with the presence of key figures like the Garuda on the gateway and doorway as well as the images in the *koshtha* niches of the temple.

and inscriptions. Michell's work is in many ways basic to the author's attempt to place the temple in its politico-cultural perspective.

The author sums up the above historiography as an unexamined repetition of conventionalized understandings, which cannot withstand careful scrutiny. In the process, the temple has been assigned to eight different deities and dated anywhere from the 5th to the vague pre-10th century AD. Tartakov emphasizes the importance of a critical study based on first hand field work for a better understanding and refinement of the old ones. This takes him on this interesting journey of a 150 years of literature on the Durga temple, from Fergusson's "racial-religious" categories to the regional, dynastic and Agamic ones and the concepts which led to the stylistic appellations such as Buddhist, Jain, Chalukya, Early Chalukya, Gupta, Mannerist (Charles Fabri), vesera, phamsana, northern (nagara), southern (dravida) and a mixture of the two.

Tartakov's first hand study of the Durga temple forms the second section of the book entitled the Durge Temple in its Cultural Context. Adopting a unified, integrated approach, he consciously moves away from the earlier British Orientalist approach, their tendency to describe temples in terms of European paradigms, and gives up other cliches of the past by seeking evidence and terminology in the traditional temple lore. His 'concrete analysis' is hence based on a re-evaluation of existing literature, emphasizing the advantage in following a chronological order (which he quotes in a series of appendices at the end) and also the need to view objects from "historically and socially bound locations". He places the temple in two distinct contexts, one within the early Chalukya region and comparable sites such as Badami and Pattadakal (Karnataka) and the second Chalukya region in Andhra (Telengana) with a concentration of temples at Alampur, by charting out a map (p. 56) of all such concentrations.

Comparative analysis of various temples is his second methodological frame to study the layout, design and iconographic programme of the temples in Aihole and outside. Inscriptions correlated with layout and design help in his dating of the temple, along with the presence of key figures like the Garuda on the gateway and doorway as well as the images in the *koshtha* niches of the temple. The comparable temples are Cave III and the Malegitti in Badami, the Meguti, Bhagavati and Sarangi Math in Aihole, Sangamesvara, Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna at Pattadakal and Mahakutesvara in Mahakuta.

In an orderly fashion he takes up the ritual *pradakshina* (circumambulation) in stages towards the sanctum i.e., from the lateral stairways to the porch, to the colonnade of the outer veranda, the *sandhara* plan of the inner hall and its images and the sanctum, and explains how the placement of the images in relation to the *garbha griha* and its deity (Aditya) is crucial for understanding the design and iconographic scheme of the temple. The admirable study of the Khajuraho temples by Devangana Desai offers the most remarkable parallel for the ritual progression in the devotee's worship. Yet Tartakov has little to show by way of textual basis for the positioning of the deities in the niches as has been superbly demonstrated by Desai for Khajuraho. In fact, it would be rather difficult to show any clear arrangement for this temple dedicated to Surya as the Saura texts do not match the other Puranic and Agamic texts for Saiva and Vaishnava temples. However the author has convincingly argued for the gateway (*pratoli*) being an integral part of the temple's layout, fitting in with its geometry, which George Michell could not perceive.

The layout is shown to represent a conscious attempt to extend the size of the temple horizontally, a feature which appears in its fullest maturity in the Pattadakal temples of the period of Vikramaditya II (AD 733–745). The date of the Durga temple is hence fixed as falling within the reign of Vijayaditya (AD 696–733/74), which saw the crucial stage in the development of Chalukya architecture, of which the Durga temple was the finest and most significant example. The Durga temple, he says, is one of the most advanced in the "extended large-scale" temples before the leap to the super scale at Pattadakal and the only major temple with two inner ambulatories, the largest before the end of Vijayaditya's reign.

Tartakov pays special attention to the *Sikhara* (tower) and shows how the *nagara sikhara* with its pyramidal form and curvilinear contour on its upper part had five distinct sub-styles: 1. The Karnataka *nagara*, 2. Early Chalukya *nagara*, 3. Telengana *nagara*, 4. A unique blending of the Telengana and Karnataka *nagara* exemplified by the Durga temple and another Sun temple in Aihole and 5. The *nagara* of the Kasi Visvanatha temple at Pattadakal. The Durga temple is a striking and mature example of the mixing of styles both in its tower and in its other architectural features—*nagara* and *dravida*, Telengana and Karnataka—the hallmark of early Chalukya tradition, designed consciously by the *acharya* and *sthapati* and hence the tower is neither primitive nor an aesthetic mistake or a restored one as has been believed hitherto.

The author describes every part of the layout and shows how the *adhishthana* (base) with its six layers of mouldings binds the whole structure both horizontally and vertically, blending with the colonnade and the *kakshasana* (sloped back) benches, the figure bearing pillars of the porch and so on. Describing the *mithuna* and other decorative figures and iconic ones like Siva as Bhikshatana, Vishnu as Narasimha and Garudavahana, Mahishasuramardini and Harihara in the niches, which are themselves a blend of the *nagara* and the *dravida* features, he rejects the Pallava influence over the sculptures claimed by Aschwin Lippe and also refutes the idea that they were placed in the niches much after the temple's construction, both as technically and stylistically untenable.

In Tartakov's words the current vision of the temple is that it is the penultimate example of a series of great temples built during the long reign of Vijayaditya, firming up the date as AD 725–30. It marks a relatively consistent development in style, with the most complex and sophisticated imagery, preceding the large scale temples of Pattadakal. S. Rajasekhara's views are the closest to Tartakov's, the latter identifying a regional dynastic tradition as the primary context of the temple's social and material production. Although simpler and less refined than the Parasuramesvara at Bhuvanesvar and the temples at Khajuraho, it is an independent and highly refined version of a fairly advanced Chalukya type, to be placed within a concrete cultural tradition, mixing both *nagara* and *dravida* in a single design. Its visual imagery was produced by the same social world within which its creators actually lived and worked.

On the basis of inscriptional evidence the patron of the temple, Komarasinga, appears as a Surya worshipper and was possibly, according to the author, a member of the Aihole Five Hundred, a merchant guild. But it had royal sanction and support, although only a few of the Chalukya structures were royal dedications. It marks the collaboration of commercial and political interests.

Aihole abounds in early temples with various sectarian affiliations, Saiva, Vaishnava, Sakta, Saura and Jaina, and this has nowhere been explained by any of the art historians, including the present author.

Tartakov's study is undoubtedly comprehensive and first hand. Yet, it raises several issues not easy to resolve. For one thing, why should the temple have been created more for the narrow interests of the ruling elite and not open to the common people? A curious conclusion of the author, considering the fact that temple building was an act of legitimation as much as it was an act of piety and hence a visible expression of patronage for the subject population to see. What made Aihole a temple town, its holiness or its association with the famous merchant guild? Again not easy to answer, for the epigraphic evidence is too meagre to make any meaningful interpretations.

The other problem relates to the absence of foundation inscriptions in most north Indian and early Deccan temples, in contrast to the direct inscriptional references in the south Indian temples. This leads to the use of style as the major criterion in the dating of temples and evolutionary schemes. For Orissa, the work of K.C. Panigrahi brought about a broad framework of cognate groups of temples, based on an integrated study of architecture, iconography and the few inscriptions available. Those with inscriptions provided the reference point for dating stylistically cognate groups. For the western Indian caves, Vidya Dehejia attempted successfully a taxonomical analysis of all elements to arrive at a chronological and evolutionary progression. But for Mamallapuranam, the carefully built up style groupings of cave and structural temples and the continuity of style across several regnal periods of the Pallavas (by K.R. Srinivasan) was seriously challenged by the inscription oriented study of R. Nagaswamy, who assigned all the temples to a single ruler, Rajasimha who ruled in the later part of the 7th century AD.

Art History has a long way to go in India. Tartakov's is an important step in this direction.

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The Many Ganeshas

R.C.C. Fynes

GANESH THE BENEVOLENT

Edited by Pratapaditya Pal

MARG, 1996, pp. 148, price not mentioned.

GANESH: INVOCATION AND COMMENTARY ON CONSCIOUSNESS

By Akhter Ahsen

Virgo Publications, 1995, pp. 227, Rs. 300.00

Ganesh the Benevolent contains nine illustrated articles, eight of them by noted academics and one by an amateur collector. After a short introduction by the editor, T. Richard Blurton in his chapter 'Ganesh in Bloomsbury: Images of the Lord of Beginnings in the British Museum' discusses sculptures of Ganesh in the Hotung Gallery of the British Museum, placing them in three classes: Ganesh as the main deity, Ganesh accompanying Shiva and Parvati, and Ganesh as a member of a group of deities. Of the first class, most notable are the images of Ganesh dancing, especially the magnificent mid-eighth century sculpture carved in pink sandstone, appropriately placed at the beginning of the Indian displays in the Gallery. Ganesh plays a subsidiary role in the devotional images of Blurton's second division, the focus of the sculptures being on the major deities, Shiva and Parvati. The third class is represented by a series of bronze sculptures which originated in India but of which some later became objects of devotion in Tibet; notable is an eleventh-century group of three seated mother goddesses flanked by Ganesh and Kubera.

Guderune Bühnemann's article 'Aspects of Tantric Ganesh in India' is a discussion of the assimilation of Tantric elements in the worship and iconography of Ganesh. The iconography of the Tantric ten-armed form of the deity is explained and illustrated.

V. Shetti in 'Aspects of Ganesh Worship in Maharashtra' shows that Ganesh's association with Maharashtra began at an early period, the earliest literary reference to the deity being in the Prakrit Saptasataka attributed to the Sātavāhana king Hala. The earliest figural representation of Ganesh may be the elephant-headed terracotta figurines dating from the second century AD found at Ter. Shetti then discusses the origins of the Ganesh festivals in Maharashtra and their later politicization by the Hindu nationalist Tilak. However, Shetti does not discuss the Shiv Sena's more recent appropriation of the Ganesh festivals, although this is mentioned and regretted by Pal in his introduction.

Guderune Bühnemann's article 'Aspects of Tantric Ganesh in India' is a discussion of the assimilation of Tantric elements in the worship and iconography of Ganesh. The iconography of the Tantric ten-armed form of the deity is explained and illustrated. Apparently, images of Ganesh were often used in spells for fascinating and overpowering victims; Ganesh was not always benevolent! An unusual image of Ganesh embracing his Śakti is described and illustrated; Ganesh touches his partner's vagina with his trunk, while she holds his penis with her right hand. Tantric Ganesh even has a seat in the human body: he is located in the mūladhara cakra, represented by a four-petalled lotus.

Pratapaditya Pal's chapter 'Dancing Ganesh in South Asia' is a detailed regional survey of the iconography of Ganesh dancing. The form was apparently invented in northern India in the sixth century. It spread throughout the subcontinent, becoming popular in Nepal and Tibet, but not in South-east Asia. Illustrated is a particularly elegant portrayal of dancing Ganesh is a ninth-century sculpture in brown sandstone now in the Rockefeller collection. Ganesh probably inherited his dancing skills from his father Shiva, but whereas Shiva's dance is the dance of cosmic creation and dissolution, Ganesh's is rather the playful dance of the leader of Shiva's celestial attendants. However, as Pal points out, Ganesh's dance is not without cosmic significance, in that he is both the creator and destroyer of obstacles. Ganesh does not only dance alone; his joining the dance of the seven Mother Goddess performed in celebration of Devi's destruction of the buffalo demon is illustrated by a ninth-century carving in sandstone now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Gauriswar Bhattacharya's article 'The Dual Role of Ganesh in the Buddhist Art of South Asia' is structured around Ganesh's polarities as creator and destroyer of obstacles. After reviewing the literary and iconographic evidence for the absorption of Ganesh into the Buddhist pantheon, the author discusses the iconography of an elephant-headed figure who is portrayed being trampled by various deities, among them Aparājitā (The Unconquerable) and Vighnāntaka (Destroyer of Obstacles. According to the author, the origins for this image lie in a legend in which Ganesh, who was placing obstacles in the way of the meditation practice of a Buddhist monk, was attacked and defeated by Vighnāntaka, who had been summoned by a monk. In Virayāna Buddhism Ganesh came to personify obstacles to perfection, and his role of destroyer of obstacles was taken over by the goddesses of the Buddhist pantheon. Among the images illustrated is a particularly fine Nepalese sculpture in stone dating from the eighteenth century, which depicts Ganesh, holding his attributes of a broken tusk and a bag of sweets, being trampled by the ferocious figure of Mahākāla.

In his chapter 'Absences and Transformations: Ganesh in the Shvetambar Jain Tradition', John E. Cort begins by discussing the apparent absence of Ganesh in the Jain tradition, the deity being rarely represented in Jain rituals and images. However, Cort points to the transformation of Ganesh within Śvetāmbara Jainism. Each of the twenty-four Fordmakers is attended by a guardian god and goddess. The guardian god (Yaksa) of Parśva, the twenty-third Fordmaker is depicted in two forms: in his more common form he is depicted as a serpent-king Dharanendra but he is also found in a form whose iconography is very similar to that of Ganesh, being on occasions referred to by that name. The main argument of Cort's article is his suggestion, following Paul Dundas and James Laidlaw, of a correspondence of function between Ganesh and Gautama Indrabhūti, one of the eleven disciples of the twenty-fourth Fordmaker, Mahāvīra. Both Ganesh and Gautama possess magic powers, Ganesh is fond of sweets while Gautama is associated with rice pudding, the name of Ganesh is invoked at the top of Hindu account books, whereas that of Gautama is written in Jain account books. Cort argues that Ganesh is 'transformed from a fat, jolly elephant-headed god into a fat, jolly, human monk, near to the heart of the Jain tradition.'

The origins of *Ganesh the Benevolent* lie in the discourse of art history and connoisseurship: those of Akhter Ahsen's *Ganesh: Invocation and Commentary on Consciousness* lie in the world of parapsychology and alternative therapies.

Robert L. Brown's chapter 'Images of Ganesh from South-east Asia' is a regional survey of the iconography of Ganesh in South-east Asia illustrated by little-known images, some of them previously unpublished. Among the earliest Ganesh images from the region is a seventh—to eighth-century stone image from Tuol Phik Kin in present day Cambodia; it is of a seated, two-armed figure, the elephant head large and deeply set into the shoulders. There are many hundreds of small, portable figures of Ganesh in stone or bronze surviving from the eleventh to the fourteenth century when much of Thailand was part of the Khmer Angor kingdom; their purpose and the reasons for their popularity are not known. Images of Ganesh from Indonesia can be identified by their characteristic seated posture, in which the feet are pressed together sole to sole, their popularity being due to the importance of Ganesh's iconography in the many Shiva temples built in Indonesia in the period of Hindu dominance from the eighth to the sixteenth century. Brown's chapter concludes with a discussion of the role played by Ganesh in the brahminical rituals associated with Thai royalty.

Terese Tse Bartholemew in 'Spirit King, Demon, and God of Wealth: Ganesh in East Asia' shows that Ganesh

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reached China via the Central Asian silk route, his earliest representation being on wall paintings dating from the sixth century. Ganesh then appears as one of nine other Buddhist 'spirit kings' who act as guardians for major figures in the Buddhist pantheon, their images being found in cave paintings and on the pedestals of Buddhist sculptures. However, Ganesh did not become popular in China; just two bronze sculptures of the deity survive from the T'ang period. Bartholomew suggests that the reason for Ganesh's unpopularity in China was due to his identification as a demonic obstacle to perfection, one of the themes of Bhattacharya's chapter. Ganesh reached Japan from China in the ninth century, where he is found in two forms: as a guardian deity in mandalas and as the sculpted figures of a male and a female elephant-headed figure locked in an embrace. In Tibet and Mongolia Ganesh becomes the demon personification of obstacles, and from Tibet this form of Ganesh entered China in the eighteenth century.

The focus of the final article 'Collecting Ganesh Images' is somewhat different; the actor Vasant Chowdhury, an enthusiastic private collector of Ganesh images, explains how his interest began and discusses some of his favourite pieces in his collection, among them a finely modelled terracotta sculpture of Parvati nursing the infant Ganesh.

Overall, the individual chapters are both interesting and scholarly, and they are all sumptuously illustrated by stunning photographs, many of them of previously unpublished images. *Ganesh the Benevolent* will become an essential reference for all those interested in the figural arts of Asia.

The origins of *Ganesh the Benevolent* lie in the discourse of art history and connoisseurship: those of Akhter Ahsen's *Ganesh: Invocation and Commentary on Consciousness* lie in the world of parapsychology and alternative therapies. What is the purpose of the book? Apparently the 'hymns and commentary on consciousness' contained in it are 'intended as a personal meditation and a guide to consciousness.'

In his introduction the author warns us that '. . .this Text must be adorned and worshipped. The journey is the Text. It is a series of lessons on disconnections.' The book is highly recommended for those who find such writing inspirational or even intelligible.

R.C.C. Fynes is at the Jain Academy, De Montfort University, School of Humanities, Leicester, U.K.

Glimpses of Indian Culture

P.R. Chari

INDIA'S CULTURE: THE STATE, THE ARTS AND BEYOND

By B.P. Singh

Oxford University Press, 1998, p. xviii+208, Rs. 425.00

Two aspects of India's culture that have particularly impressed Singh are authority and respect; and *sruti* and *smriti*. He notes here that Mahatma Gandhi commanded more respect than the Governor General, and the continuing relevance of the *guru-shishya parampara* that cannot be substituted by seminars and conferences.

The preface informs us that the author has not recounted the history of contemporary Indian art and culture, but provided "a glimpse of some aspects of India's culture", and highlighted its relevance for the social and political life of the nation. And, in the foreword, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, felicitates the author's effort to survey the "complicated and delicate" relationship between the artist and the state in its role as supporter of the arts. That role was cast upon the Indian State after Independence when a democratic form of governance replaced royalty as the chief patron of the arts.

This book is also a personal account. Singh confesses to having been deeply influenced by Basham's assertion (A *Cultural History of India*) that no country has exhibited such a long "cultural continuity" as India; Jawaharlal Nehru's reflection (*Discovery of India*) that its "cultural background", comprising popular philosophy, tradition, history, myth and legend, has profoundly influenced the lives of its citizens; Tagore's belief (*Gitanjali*) that the continuity of Indian culture derives from the support of its masses and something eternal about the land; and, above all, Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar's' statement (Sanskriti ke Char Adhyay) that India's "composite culture" must guide the idea of a world-culture and world-humanity. Moored in this intellectual tradition Singh has indulged in larger philosophic speculations than strictly warranted by a work evaluating the state's role in the area of culture.

The state and culture are generally believed to be antithetical to each other. And the patronage of the arts by the state is believed to be the surest way to ensure its mediocrity. The author argues that this is not true. Having been Secretary in the Department of Culture and written several books earlier on issues of public administration and social change, especially in the context of North-east India, the author is well qualified to argue this proposition. He initially sketches the role of the Indian State in promoting culture. This culminated in the eighties with the establishment of the Department of Culture, followed by the organization of Festivals of India in many countries abroad, and the establishment of seven Zonal Cultural Centres.

Two aspects of India's culture that have particularly impressed Singh are authority and respect; and *sruti* and *smriti*. He notes here that Mahatma Gandhi commanded more respect than the Governor General, and the continuing relevance of the *guru-shishya parampara* that cannot be substituted by seminars and conferences. He also believes that a basic unity informs the "pluralistic ethos" of Indian culture, but stresses the "need to establish the interrelationship between culture and civilization. . . to bridge the gap between what we say and what we do". In elaboration, he continues: "We argue that culture is a thought process, while civilization is conduct. And we have thought that our culture can remain pure even if our conduct suffers degradation".

These are unexceptional observations and conclusions. But Singh might have proceeded further to investigate why the "Indian mind proverbially functions at different levels". He might have noted that an Indian is enmeshed in several social structures—family, caste, community and region. He is oppressed by a sense of duty to all these systems. How do these several loyalties affect his conduct and influence the Indian civilization? This is worth investigation, especially with caste and community becoming the new vocabulary of divisive politics in the country. How this developing milieu will interrogate the composite nature of Indian culture is a question of seminal importance to its future evolution.

The more challenging theory advanced by the author is that culture is "an important variable, along with

The emergence of culture as an important factor in determining the status of an individual in society, or of a nation in the world is a matter of great significnace. Art has a curious way of belonging to its times and yet of being removed from it. Art has its own agenda, and has habitually risen above the conditions prevailing on the ground in every period of human history. The songs, dance-forms, literary activities and works of art produced in the 20th century have found new expressions and have gone to prove that this century has not only been the greatest in human history but has also been a period of new discoveries and radical renewals. While all the old art forms have exhibited significant achievements, several entirely new ones have been invented and popularized such as cinema, pop music, and television documentary.

India's Culture: The State, The Arts and Beyond *by B.P. Singh, p. 22*

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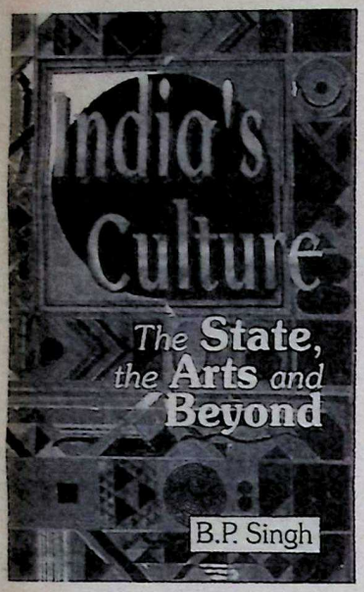

market and trade, in determining the position of a country within the comity of nations". He decries the standardization inherent in the globalization of culture, which must lead to cultural uniformity and, at one remove, the hegemony of western culture getting encrusted. This process accelerated after 1991, when liberalization and dismantling of state controls became the new *mantras* of the post-Cold War Indian State. The emergence of what Naipaul calls a "universal civilization," marked by an ascendance of western values and buttressed by its technological superiority, could lead to a "breakdown of moral, ecological and spiritual values". This needs to be countered. For this purpose the cultural heritage of India must be taught in schools, and teachers should be suitably educated.

These issues are further explored within a global perspective. The author observes that "three powerful lights" have emerged in the closing years of this century viz., democracy, ecology and culture. The successful anti-colonial movement and demise of the Soviet Union highlights the rise of egalitarianism in the international system and the democratic idea within domestic polities. Concern for preserving the deteriorating natural environment has reached new levels of awareness. In the sphere of culture, the author holds, "this century has not only been the greatest in human history but has also been a period of new discoveries and radical renewals". And culture can also promote trust and harmonize the cooperative economic institutions needed "to sustain the independence of each country as well as their inter-dependence".

Proceeding further, the author discusses Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis. One must agree with his perceptive conclusion that it serves the institutional needs of military establishments. They are desperately in search of adversaries and concomitant tensions and instabilities to justify their existence after the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, civilizations, no less than national cultures, have both conflicting and unifying aspects. The domination of Marxist ideology over the contrary pull of ethnicity resulted in conflict and the unravelling of the Soviet Union. But this phenomenon has been reversed in India. The adaptive and adoptive strengths of its culture have enabled different communities to live together in harmony for centuries.

What Singh might have examined more closely here is the role of ethnicity in causing both social convergence and divergence within the complex matrix of Indian culture. He has also not seriously discussed what needs to be done to prevent the submergence of Indian culture within the burgeoning global and western culture. Actually, the onslaught upon Indian culture is twofold—from without, but also from within. Apropos, Indian films and television, with some rare exceptions, are largely promoting a debased form of mass culture. Its special idiom, music, dance, kitsch art, horizontal spread of education in India and its rapidly growing middle class has accelerated these unfortunate developments. Again, idealistic institutions are seeking to reverse this slide into vulgarity. The author might have considered what the state can do to counter this phenomenon. This is indubitably a delicate area of public policy. Cultural revivalism can shade over into fundamentalism of various hues. The vital question is: how can the state preserve Indian culture from its rapid vulgarisation, whilst retaining its essential plurality, but arrest its channelisation into any especial socio-political direction. The problem is difficult. But this dilemma will increasingly confront the Indian State in the next millennium, and urgently requires much greater thought and debate towards finding a middle way.

The author is optimistic in this regard, whilst refraining from suggesting concrete remedies. He feels that Indian culture can find "new expressions" once again to withstand the alien onslaughts. But he is assailed by doubts, and asks in a footnote "whether India is going to imitate the West, and become an economic superpower, and in the process lose its Indianness. It would be sad if that happened as once the Indian identity is lost it will be difficult to bring it back. I believe that India is not going to lose its Indianness." And that leads to the author's main thesis that mankind needs to hark back to the teachings of Gandhi and Buddha, and the essential humanity of their message of peace and compassion and self-questioning and respect for our environs. A pro-active encouragement of these values is needed to ensure a "multicultural coexistence" for the salvation of the world.

An important book. One hopes the author will expand these ideas with more reflection and data to substantiate his major conclusions. He should also take note of tribal culture, and its place within the total schema of Indian culture. This does not get adequately noticed in general treatises on Indian culture.

It is believed that the locus of power in the twenty-first century may shift from Europe to Asia. The economic strength of India will no doubt increase, but one is not sure that India, like the USA and China, will emerge as a great world economic power having a decisive say in world trade. Notwithstanding the various shortcomings and failures of India, Indian culture has continued to provide a distinct personality to Indians as well as to the people of Indian origin in different lands. One can be reasonably certain that the growing role of creative persons in India's society, polity and economy will ensure that India will retain this personality. Democratic institutions, ecological concerns and our rich traditions will support each other.

From *India's Culture, p . 141*

P.R. Chari former civil Servant, is currently the Co-Director of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.

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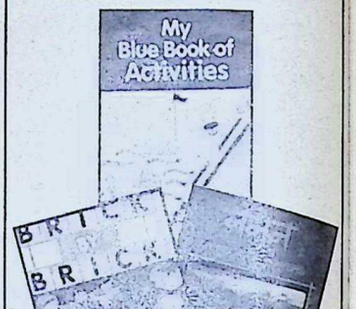

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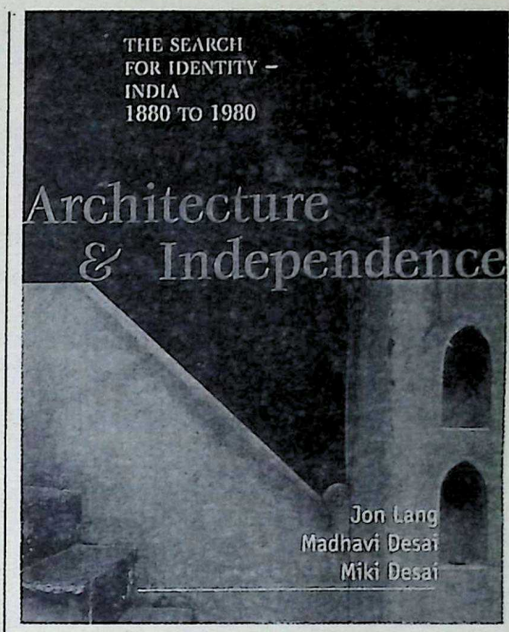
From Santiniketan Cottages to Delhi Farmhouses

Narayani Gupta

ARCHITECTURE AND INDEPENDENCE: THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY—INDIA 1880 TO 1990

By Jon Lang, Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. xix + 347, b&w photographs, glossary, appendices, bibliography, index, Rs. 1850.00



This is easily the first really indispensable work on modern Indian architecture. The authors write with disarming modesty that theirs is a history of architecture in India, with no pretensions to being *the* history—which is true for any such survey. Jon Lang works in Australia, and has published books and essays on architectural theory, American architecture and building in India. The Desais teach in Ahmedabad, and have written on that city and on the architecture of Gujarat. Together, they have written 300 pages, collated masses of photographs carefully laid out so as to be adjacent to the relevant text, compiled a massive bibliography which includes many unpublished theses of students of architecture, a good glossary and comprehensive index. After a preliminary chapter surveying earlier architecture, there is a thorough survey of the century from the 1880s; 1947 is not treated as marking a major break in all respects. Unlike most books, this goes beyond the discussion of styles, and traces the growth of the profession, varieties of 'housing' and other 'mere buildings'. There are photographs of many architects; the doyen Achyut Kanvinde gets two—one as a young 'Harvard-returned' architect (p. 208) and the other as we know him now (p. 286).

One needs to be distanced from the past to see it as history. This is one explanation for why till two decades ago Indian architectural history ended in the 18th century. Only in the 1980s, following Gavin Stamp and Robert Irving, did Indian and non-Indian scholars begin to assess the architecture of the 'colonial' period. (The important exception was Sten Nilsson's fine work on European architecture in India, published in 1968). A few years later, post-Independence architecture also became popular as a subject of study (again there was one important earlier work—Norma Evenson's excellent book on Chandigarh, published in 1966). Most of the articles and books listed in the bibliography were published after the later 1980s. The authors read this as a very positive sign. "The dexterity of Indian architectural historians in dealing with much of the recent past and, particularly the colonial past after a long period of almost total silence reflects a growing self confidence" (p. 302). This has resulted in two developments—one, the inclusion of 'colonial architecture' into curricula of schools of architecture; two, movements for the preservation of historic buildings (p. 259).

The first one-third of the book (till p. 109) covers ground familiar to us from the work of Koch, Morris, Davies and Tillotson. What follows is what is new, where much that has not been studied by Norma Evenson (*Indian Metropolis*) has been brought to light. Rabindranath Tagore is seen as wearing yet another hat—that of architect, building cottages in Santiniketan for himself and for his guests, including a special house for Gandhiji (pp. 122–25); we learn of a Frank Lloyd Wright design of the office of the Calico Mills at Ahmedabad which was never built (p. 210) and are reminded of Joseph Stein's earliest work in Delhi—the Gandhi Bhavan in Delhi University (not in Delhi College, as printed on p. 192), of the work and writing of Claude Batley, the pioneer in Ahmedabad (p. 141ff). There is a reference to Jhabwala's elegant building for Kirori Mal College at Delhi, often forgotten while Walter George's St. Stephens College is always recalled. The quaint brick and gabled house on the outer ring road at Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi, built by Romi Khosla, has been noticed (p. 268). The authors are generous with acknowledgements [sometimes the text gets clogged with over-numerous references (one would wish that 'Bahga, Bahga and Bahga' could be reduced to B3!)] and are careful to avoid snide remarks and obscure turns of phrase. In other words, this is not a book only for other architects, but for other lay people . This is not to imply that they shy away from all value-judgements. On p. 272 they refer to one of the most deplorable developments in Delhi—the 'farm houses'. "Built on sites of up to 15 hectares, they are islands of opulence, apparently breaking the DDA's building codes but, evidently, politically protected. The buildings and gardens are circumscribed by high walls and consist of an ostentatious mixture of architectural ideas. They stand in strong contrast to the Gandhian image of a rural retreat". Again, there is an excellent section (pp. 246–49) indicating how modern architecture came to be challenged across the world. In the context of India, one of the major criticisms of its use is that "Modernist urban designs are based on the assumption that streets are 'bad' places . . . . While Dickensian conditions still prevail in many Indian cities, turning their backs on the street destroys its use as an important setting for life" (p. 247).

The *enfant terrible* of architectural historians, Gautam Bhatia, categorized post-Independence architecture as 'Punjabi Baroque', 'Bania Gothic' and more such. These were caricatures but they did draw attention to the importance of the client in shaping buildings (the very mutation of the word is significant—in earlier times, the architect was the client of the moneyed patron, today the moneyed man is the client!). The crucial decades after Independence are excellently analysed, highlighting Nehru's interest in (literally) building new India, and his conviction that modern was not just the best, it should be the only official style. There are examples of other political figures who advocated the use of elements symbolic of the pre-colonial past and of alternative traditions; and of the rich, who want nothing by way of *jaalis* and balustrades to be left out, nothing taken away. . . Not written, but implied, is that this rampant individualism has played havoc with our towns, where combined with "plotted" development where each plot is built upon with little regard to what there is nearby (Mansingh Rana's Nehru Planetarium near the Tughlaq *kushk*, and Sabiki's funky dome on the HUDCO Bazaar near the Lodi mausoleum notwithstanding); massive five-star hotels stand knee-deep in jhuggis, and neighbourhoods in big cities will probably have to devise elevated walkways for pedestrians to avoid the scrum of cars parked and parking. A work of architecture can be a work of art but it cannot be tucked away in a gallery. It costs a lot of money, and shapes and is shaped by the manner in which it is used.

Subtitles are often more telling than titles. Norma Evenson's *Indian Metropolis*, covering the same time-frame, was unambiguously subtitled 'A View Towards the West'. The present work courageously analyses 'the search for identity' and therefore, has to deal with 'Indianization', 'traditionalism' and 'revivalism' (pp. 12–16), ("the search for roots is very exciting"—Anant Raje, quoted on p. 302) and to decide what is 'the mainstream' (p. 231). On p. 17 they argue that Dayanand's 'Back to

Subtitles are often more telling than titles. Norma Evenson's *Indian Metropolis*, covering the same time-frame, was unambiguously subtitled 'A View Towards the West'. The present work courageously analyses 'the search for identity' and therefore, has to deal with 'Indianization', 'traditionalism' and 'revivalism' (pp. 12–16), ("the search for roots is very exciting"—Anant Raje, quoted on p. 302) and to decide what is 'the mainstream' (p. 231).

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the Vedas' was paralleled in architecture by 'Back to the Shilpa Sastras'. I wonder. Apart from Ram Raz's *Architecture of the Hindoos*, commissioned by the government in 1834, there was no interest in the Shilpa Sastras till the 1920s, when Patrick Geddes encouraged their translations. Even today, for all the talk of '*vaastu*' and the 'mandala', an architect does not have any user-friendly book of reference on the Shilpa Sastras or the Manasara. How rigorous then, is the concern for 'roots' or 'tradition'? In most cases it is merely tokenism. The authors also add a word of caution to those who criticize 'modern' as not being 'Indian'. "Those people who expect only ideas generated in India to be acceptable will be long waiting as the world passes them by" (p. 249). The confusion of ideologies is nowhere more obvious than in Chandigarh. People's responses to architecture are shaped as much by national/regional pride as by aesthetics, and Chandigarh has become a booster for local self-esteem, though there was a long period when it was seen as not sympathetic to Indian needs and conditions. So much has been covered in this book that it would have been unfair to ask for more—but it would have been useful to have had a discussion on interiors, to assess their success/failure as living or work spaces. Architecture should not simply stun the senses, it should be workable. 'Modernism' which is not humane is truly unattractive. The State Trading Corporation building in New Delhi, which houses the magnificient Cottage Industries Emporium, has no access to the upper floors for the disabled (though this is mandatory for all public buildings) or a lift for transporting goods! Sensitivity to Indian styles has not so far been matched by sensitivity to Indian needs.

In a book of this length, a few typographical errors are inevitable. I am indicating these not by way of criticism, but simply because I noticed them—jharookha (p. 25), Salingarh(p. 45), Ebenzer (p. 83), Bulanshahr (p.89), Chapauk (p. 99), Halwar (p. 238), Haviz Contractor (p. 333, though he is Hafeez on p. 255), Khrisi (p. 341). Chittagong was briefly in Burma, but no longer (p. 333). The stupa on p. 207 is at Sanchi, not Ranchi. On p. 260 the Delhi Urban Art Commission is criticized because (in 1994) there were no architects among its three nominated members. This is to forget that each proposal submitted to the DUAC was scrutinized by at least three architect-advisers, whose comments were for most part accepted by the Commission.

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Music As Prayer

Keshav Desiraju

KNOW YOUR TYAGARAJA

By S.V.K.

T.R. Publications, 1997, pp. 206, Rs. 150.00

This compilation of articles from *The Hindu* will be welcomed by music lovers who are familiar with the songs of Tyagaraja as rendered in concert but not with the language of the songs, by those who speak and understand Telugu but are unfamiliar with the spiritual dimension, and by those who are primarily interested in music as prayer. The publishers and *The Hindu* should further be complimented on adding to the volume of critical writing in English on the subject of classical music. Since the publication of this book, there has been at least one more article in *The Hindu*. It is to be hoped that there are many more and that a second volume will appear.

Each of the twenty articles carries a detailed examination of a theme, often through the text of a song, with references to parallel texts in Sanskrit, and occasionally to other songs. S.V.K. has an enviable familiarity with the Valmiki Ramayana, and is always able to find echoes from the epic in Tyagaraja. In addition, we have the text, in English transliteration, with translation, of seventy-nine songs, including the pancaratna kritis.

All this adds up to a sizable volume of material though *Know Your Tyagaraja* does not, indeed, present "a comprehensive assessment of the greatness of Sri Tyagaraja", as the blurb claims. What we do have is a set of deeply pious statements, which essentially seek to explain the nature of Tyagaraja's devotion in the context of traditional worship. Thus we have essays, for instance, on the good fortune of Sabari and Bharata, on the efficacy of the recitation of the name of Rama, and on Rama's valour, all as interpreted by Tyagaraja. S.V.K. clearly recognizes that Tyagaraja was a poet, scholar, and musical genius, but his primary interest is in the Rama *bhakta*, and his audience the spiritually minded *rasika*.

The translations are well done, and if they lack the poetry of the recent translations of Jackson,[1] they add to the literal, if ever reliable, translations of Ramanujachari.[2] An example will demonstrate the point. Consider these alternative translations of the opening lines of Kanakanarucira;

"The more I gaze on you in your golden clothes
The more your magnificent glory grows!
Day after day in my mind with love I gaze upon you
And the more I gaze at you, in your golden clothes
The more your magnificent glory grows!"
(Jackson)

"Sweeter will be the devotee's pleasure, the more, he, with a loving mind, daily sees you and your charming face radiating beauty and unbounded glory" (Ramanujachari).

"With a loving mind, as I daily see your charming face my desire and adoration increase" (S.V.K.).

It will, however, be immediately obvious that none of these translations conveys anything of the plaintive Varali of the song as rendered. This is not merely a trite observation, but is at the heart of an old and much contested debate. How important is sahitya, and how do *raga* and *sahitya* complement each other? Are detailed textual explorations necessary? Would it have made a difference if the text of the songs was non-spiritual? Does the often cumbersome text of the songs detract from the quality of the music, or put off the uninitiated listener?

S.V.K. does not enter into this discussion, but it is worth a little time. Recent issues[3] of the Chennai based *Sruti* have encouraged a lively debate on this matter. There is one view which holds that Tyagaraja was a saint, whose musical output was but an offering to his God, and that if his songs have intrinsic merit, it was only divine grace that made it so. The other view is that Tyagaraja was a deeply religious and spiritually evolved person, who chose the medium of classical music as his mode of expression, and indeed creatively developed that medium through his work. Both these views have their extreme positions.

There are interesting aspects to this debate. Sainthood is not generally attributed to Syama Sastri or Muthuswami Diksitar though their music is marked by devotion and prayer, sometimes awesomely so. I can think of no good reason for this other than that the songs of Tyagaraja are possibly better known because many of the songs

1. Jackson, William J., *Tyagaraja Life and Lyrics*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

2. Ramanujachari, C., *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1966.

3. Issue 145 (October 1996), Issue 152 (May 1997), Issue 156 (September 1997), Issue 159 (December 1997).

. . . music content is crucial in determining appeal and reach; but it is also true that the text is important, and devotional texts seem to have a further appeal. Given this, the compositions of the Trinity, and only the Trinity, represent an exalted form combining musical richness, felicity of phrase, and absolute devotion.

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are, on the whole, easier to teach and sing. The songs of Syama Sastri, often in the simplest and most appealing Telugu, are austere and difficult, while the songs of Muthuswami Diksitar are majestic, and not for the unwary. But the songs of Tyagaraja are generally conversational, often questioning, full of homely examples, and in simple Telugu. Further they say something about the composer's own spiritual speculations, of the kind that S.V.K. discusses so well, adding to this reputation as a saint and religious teacher.

No claims other than scholarship are generally made for any other composer, and this includes Swati Tirunal, Patnam Subramania Iyer, Mysore Vasudevachar or Papanasam Sivan, but this does not prevent their songs from being widely taught and sung. This suggests that musical content can be the determining factor in the acceptability or popularity of any piece. Consider for instance, Bhavayami Raghuramam, Raghuvamsasuta, Brocevarevarura or Ka va va.

Indeed the argument can be extended by considering the whole new world of popular entertainment. The absence of spiritual content, or of any other noble or uplifting sentiment, does not prevent the vast popularity of film songs. Consider the romantic hits of the fifties and sixties, or A.R. Rahman's wonderful tunes set to meaningless words.

It seems quite clear therefore that music content is crucial in determining appeal and reach; but it is also true that the text is important, and devotional texts seem to have a further appeal. Given this, the compositions of the Trinity, and only the Trinity, represent an exalted form combining musical richness, felicity of phrase, and absolute devotion. Their songs outline their great contributions to the grammar and form of the art, and demonstrate their fine understanding of the use of *raga* and *tala*. It would be an enormous pity if musical virtuosity was to be regarded as somehow detracting from the spiritual powers of the Trinity. Tyagaraja may well be regarded as a saint by those who know about these matters, but human achievement deserves its recognition.

In fairness to S.V.K., he does not take an adversarial position on this issue, as many of the interlocutors in *Sruti* have done, but presents one view, and this with erudition and involvement. For this, and for all writing which adds to our knowledge, we should be grateful.

Keshav Desiraju lives in New Delhi.

If You Ask Me. . .

Media Predators

N.S. Jagannathan

The book** has not yet arrived in India and so I have not read it. But a review of it in the *New York Times Book Review* of August 3, 1997 tells enough about the Canadian media predator, Conrad Black, to provide a starting point for some stray thoughts on the almost paradigmatic shift in the global media scene that has occurred towards the end of this century. Press barons of earlier generations were no angels, but compared to the new breed, they were heroically self-denying in the exercise of the power they undoubtedly possessed. This was partly because the socio-political environment then was vastly different. It was then *de rigueur* in a newspaper owner to differentiate himself from producers of other commodities and profess a public purpose and a social conscience, whatever his private feelings. It was considered bad form to flaunt one's acquisition of wealth or to be seen crudely exercising one's power. But the end of the century has enthroned a very different public morality. It has transplanted in the socio-political field Adam Smith's *economic* doctrine of a million individually selfish motivations miraculously producing optimal public good. This has enabled media privateers to be unabashed about competitively grabbing newspapers, television stations and satellite channels and exercising ostentatiously their power not only over their employees (however talented and high powered) but also over governments.

Aided by the spirit of the times, men like Black and Murdoch have given a new dimension to their front corporations that span continents. This is because of the exceptional nature of the "commodity" whose production they control. The companies they control are not like the abominated multinationals of earlier generations. These had a definite locus of operations, like mining companies of yore, and later, producers of consumer items and even providers of services. For this reason, these were amenable to the discipline of municipal laws, though their enormous global clout and informal influence over local elites, particularly over politically weak regimes, made them get away with whatever they wanted. But the media, especially the electronic ones, transcend national frontiers in a basically different way. Their products, namely information and entertainment, are in a sense "insubstantial" and not location-bound. They are also *simultaneously* consumed by millions and affect in a direct but subtle way the *minds* of their consumers.

And for this very reason, those who control these transnational media enjoy an intangible power, with little of the accountability that circumscribe the wielders of traditional forms of power such as democratic governments. More than the media tycoons of the thirties—whose power was confined to the print medium and whose reach did not extend beyond national frontiers—the media privateers of our times rule the air. National laws are largely impotent against their extra-territorial forays, because of the literally ethereal transmission of their "products" across continents. The famous outburst of Stanley Baldwin in the thirties directed against the press barons of his time, about their enjoying "power without responsibility, the privilege of the harlot through the ages", has a deadlier appositeness in the present age. National control over their penetrative reach has to be either drastic like total shut out as in China, Singapore or France or ineffective and bumbling as in India.

The Indian Government has for sometime now been in an agony of indecision over a "policy on foreign media", both print and electronic. The decision on print media is relatively easy but electronic media is more dicey. There is a lot of controversy, both ideological and practical, on how to combat the buccaneering designs of global media privateers on the prowl seeking to grab more "sky-power" for infiltrating Indian homes. A Parliamentary Committee has turned in its recommendations on two gut issues: that permission be accorded to foreign holding in private Indian broadcasting, but at well below the level that will confer controlling interest; "cross media" holdings be permitted, meaning that Indian media entrepreneurs be allowed to straddle both the print and the electronic media. Full details are lacking on the exact nature of these compromise solutions.

In some ways, the new regulatory zeal is a case of trying to lock the stable door after the horse has bolted, or more precisely, in the expressive Tamil idiom, letting go of the tether and trying to catch the cow's tail. The invasion of the Indian skies had been going on for quite some time now, partly unnoticed, partly policy-induced in a muddled way. Ambiguities (and cross purposes) in the policy of globalization in the wider context have been used to their advantage by the likes of Murdoch and his Trojan horses (some of whom were actually making the policy) in the government and who make no bones about revealing where their loyalties really lay when it was no longer necessary to hide them.

However, with elections round the corner, no decisions can be taken immediately. But the war between rival lobbies, now involuntarily on hold, will no doubt resume once the political dust settles.

* * *

To return to Conrad Black: unlike Murdoch, he is only a *Press* baron. Though his print empire is world-wide, he seems to have little interest in conquering the skies. Black is not the first Canadian to have acquired a newspaper empire abroad, there having been two successful compatriots blazing the trail in England in this century. The first was Lord Beaverbrook who was very much a baron of the British Press in the first half of the century, owning the *Daily Express, Sunday Express* and *Evening Standard*. He was very much an activist-owner, using his papers for propagating his brand of populist imperial conservatism. He was also very much in the politics of his times and was a minister of information in Lloyd George's cabinet in 1918 and successfully minister of Aircraft production and supply and Lord Privy Seal in Churchill's war cabinet. The other was Lord Thomson, who moved into Britain after the Second World War and acquired control, among other papers, of the *Times* of London, only to sell it after a while, as Northcliffe had done decades earlier. (The *Times* is now owned by Murdoch.) But neither of his predecessors had Black's kind of global

Aided by the spirit of the times, men like Black and Murdoch have given a new dimension to their front corporations that span continents. This is because of the exceptional nature of the "commodity" whose production they control.

** *Shades of Black: Conrad Black and the World's Fastest Growing Press Empire*. By Richard Siklos. MacClelland and Stewart, pp. 466, £ 24.95.

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spread of newspaper power, though Thomson had a paper in Ghana at one time. He also made ineffectual efforts to get a toe-hold in India, the thin end of the wedge being the Thomson Press. Nothing came of it, except, reactively, an official cabinet resolution against allowing entry to foreign press media into India, which is still official policy.

As of date, Black actively controls important papers in England (*The Telegraph*), Israel (*Jerusalem Post*), Australia (*The Sydney Morning Herald*), Canada (*Southam*, the largest chain of newspapers in that country) and the US (*Chicago Sun-Times*), once owned by Murdoch himself. *The Telegraph* was a particularly prize catch. (A minor point of curious family history is that Black's great-great-grandfather, Thomas Riley, who had come to England in the last century, had acquired a "fractional interest" in the very paper that a century later Black bought outright.) Once a high-toned Tory paper (the opposite number of the liberal *Guardian*,) it was once financially sound but fell on difficult days and was up for grabs in 1985. Black bought it against stiff competition and, as on earlier occasions with Thomson, against much xenophobic prejudice. He nursed it back to its original health, confirming his reputation as a turn-around artist of exceptional acumen.

Though there are important differences, both Black and Murdoch are brothers under the skin, sharing the same values, dreams and attitudes. Newspapers (and, in the case of Murdoch, Satellite Television channels) are property, acquisition of which is an itch, a challenge to their entrepreneurial animal instinct and a gratification of a passion for raw power. Black is less obviously interested than Murdoch in using his papers for political manipulation as was notoriously evident in the way Murdoch used his British tabloid, *Sun*, to defeat Labour in the last but one election but to make it win in the more recent one. Both interventions had made Murdoch an extra-constitutional power factor in British politics whose nature has altered more than somewhat as a consequence. There is now clearly discernible a new complicity between value-neutral politicians and value-neutral media tycoons sharing a moral vacuum and an unsentimental, manipulative, transactional relationship of mutual interest.

Black, Murdoch and others of their ilk have completely subverted the philosophy of public purpose of a newspaper, that once was universally acknowledged, however hypocritically. The Press is no longer perceived by the likes of them as an unofficial "estate of the realm" with a key countervailing societal role as a moral and political conscience keeper. However high-falutin this claim on its behalf may sound in the light of the known venalities of this institution, it has historically had a societal sanction. It is this high moral ground that the likes of Black and Murdoch have gratuitously surrendered by deliberately choosing for their papers the lesser role of a popular entertainer which will earn enough profit for their owners to stay afloat and permit them to enjoy the power and influence that go with the ownership of the media. At one level, the media are the new opiate of the people, providing the cheap thrills of voyeuristic sex, even when the context is tragic, as in the recent case of Princess Diana's death. At another level, it is trivialized politics tendentiously presented, with the real issues fudged to suit the prejudices of the tycoons.

Their attitude to the professionals they employ is equally revealing. Both are self-confessedly activist proprietors, hiring and firing at will their senior editors and changing policies at will. Black is quoted as telling a gathering of journalists in 1994 that "he believes in the "proprietor model of newspapering." As for what Black thinks of journalists, the review quotes some hilarious examples. These *obiter dicta* are hardly likely to enthuse his employees. Early on in his life, when he was not the tycoon he became later, he said, "my experience with journalists authorises me to record that a very large number of them are ignorant, lazy, opinionated, intellectually dishonest and inadequately supervised." He had no great respect for investigative journalists either. In an internal letter he wrote to the employees of *The Telegraph* he had recently acquired in 1986 he said: "A great many of them are irresponsible. They have huge power, and many of them are extremely reckless." In a column he wrote in the *Toronto Sun*, he called investigative journalists, "swarming, grunting masses of jackals." Phew! Black, it seems, is a great—and successful—suer of reporters for libel. In fact, he boasted to Sieklos, the author of the book, that suing journalists was a "profit centre for me."

Men like Black and Murdoch are the new breed of "stateless" buccaneers with no particular loyalties or strong societal commitments, seeking to satisfy their primitive squirelling instinct for acquisition of (invisible) property and power. A globalized world is tailor-made for the gratification of their insatiable ambitions.

N.S. Jagannathan was foremerly the editor of Indian Express *and* The Indian Review of Books.

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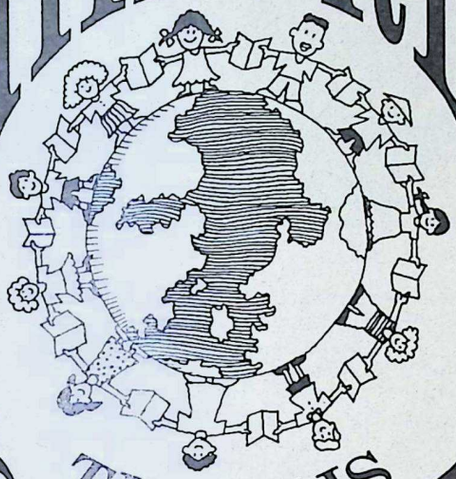

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Charles Taylor

in conversation

with Rajeev Bhargava

Charles Taylor is Professor of Philosophy and Political Science at McGill University. He was for many years Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford and a Fellow of All Souls College. He has taught at Princeton, University of California at Berkeley and l'Universite' de Montreal.

His published works include *The Explanation of Behaviour, Hegel, Human Agency, Language, Philosophy and The Human Sciences* and most recently *Sources of the Self*.

He is active in politics and has run for the Canadian Federal Parliament on behalf of the New Democratic Party. He was recently appointed to the Conseil de la Langue Francaise in his native Quebec.

Professor Taylor was in New Delhi in December to attend a seminar on Alternative Modernities. He gave an exclusive interview for *The Book Review* to Professor Rajeev Bhargava of the Jawaharlal Nehru University which we are publishing here.

Rajeev Bhargava: Let me begin by asking you to state your agreements and disagreements with some of your contemporaries, for instance with Rawls, Habermas, and Macintyre, perhaps even Sandel. Isn't it true that at one level your disagreements with Rawls and Habermas and agreements with Macintyre are overstated? Perhaps the issue can be put in the following way: At the meta-ethical level you are with Macintyre, while at the level of political values, you are more with Rawls.

Charles Taylor: To some degree, yes.

R.B.: Note that I am saying 'more with'. This is a comparative judgment. I am only saying that your political/ethical values have greater resemblance to Rawls's and Habermas's than to Macintyre's. Could you comment and if you agree, elaborate on this?

C.T.: Your way of putting it, i.e. meta-ethically more with Macintyre and ethically more with Rawls clarifies some misunderstanding of my position but in fact I have a different take on each of these four people, Macintyre, Rawls, Sandel and Habermas. First of all, I am closer to Habermas politically than I am to Rawls. Not that I don't tremendously value the second Rawls. One of the great theoretical discoveries in our possession now is the idea of overlapping consensus, although I think Rawls doesn't quite follow through on that as much as he might. This idea that we have to aim at some kind of moral agreement, an agreement each one of us morally endorses on certain common principles with which we operate in a democratic society, while having very deeply different background justifications, which Rawls calls comprehensive theories of the good, is absolutely right. Where I don't quite agree with Rawls is that I think that the area of agreement has to be in each case negotiated and can't be determined beforehand by some kind of supra- principle, which Rawls still seems to introduce here alongwith the idea of reasonableness. Nevertheless, I think that Rawls is still a little bit too narrow in the actual political theory he puts forward because this theory is still predicated on the idea that comes from the first Rawls's theory of justice, that somehow what we want to agree is decide on some principles for what he calls the basic structure of society, to decide these in terms of justice, which is the paramount good. There is a whole set of considerations which he can't properly deal with, considerations which are situated in a kind of middle zone between what moral principles to adopt and very tough minded political considerations about how we render stable a democratic society and I think that there is still a cut off point there in the middle layer which Tocqueville so well occupied where a principled understanding of what underlies a political regime of democracy goes along with a sensitive reading of the kinds of practices needed to sustain it.

Now, Habermas is closer to that because he has concerned himself with issues like how you make democracy stable and so on. I still think however that an irreducible difference exists in our meta-ethical views, in that he really thinks that there is such a thing as a set of answers that you can derive from the criteria of discourse ethics; that he is forced to think by his whole theory that there is a close fit between discourse ethics where issues are decided on the basis of principles which everyone can agree and an ethic that emerges both ontogenetically and historically—that is as we grow up we get closer to this ethic and leave behind an earlier ethic, the tit for tat ethic, for example. He also provides us with a story of convergence as we go to an earlier point in our civilization. I think all this involves an outrageously over-simple and unjustified staging of different civilizations and history. It doesn't come anywhere close to coping with the contemporary task of trying to reach some consensus across civilizations. It necessarily places all these non-liberal societies in a lower stage. I just cannot agree with that at all.

Then we shift to the other side of the fence here. There is a big difference between Macintyre and Sandel. I think I have a lot of normative agreement with Sandel because I see him as part of the republican tradition. The way he has laid his book *Democracy and Discontent* makes it a lot clearer that there are two facets to traditional American understanding of democracy, one which deals with individual rights and with procedures to ensure that they are respected and second with the ethos of Republican self-rule, which has been gradually marginalized. I have a great degree of sympathy with the idea that we need to build the whole ethos of Republican self-rule, even though I am not sure whether Sandel's particular recipe will work.

On the other hand, with Alasdaire Macintyre I have a lot to disagree, although here the kind of distinction you are making is really at its most apposite. I probably agree more with his meta-ethical views than anybody else, mainly because he has developed them. In fact I feel I have got some very important ideas from Alasdaire. For example, the entire idea of how we can supersede an argument based on an earlier position, by capturing all the positive arguments of the earlier position and overcoming some of its difficulties. This idea of the development of a moral argument I got from him. I still see it in his *Whose Justice, Which Rationality*. True Alasdaire belongs normatively to a completely different world in many ways, at least two if not three. One, he is resolutely anti-liberal, and in fact he has been anti-liberal for a long time as a kind of reaction against liberalism, first from the hard Left when he was a Trotskyite, and later from another standpoint, which I won't characterize as Right. I don't have the greatest sympathy for that. Another point which is related is that this anti-liberalism involves too blanket a condemnation of modernity but it seems to emerge that for him all the different philosophical attempts to defend modernity are unmitigated disasters. He is very critical of all the major thinkers of modernity but I don't think that their contribution reduces itself to this trail of errors that he alleges. Thirdly, on the negative side there is a kind of writing off of the modern political state. Now this writing off is from a normative position not totally distinct from mine but it is still different. You see Alasdaire seems to have a hyper-democratic sensibility, a feel for a society in which people could really participate and control but he sees the modern state as so bureaucratized and so distant that he has just written it off so that principled action within the system, the kind of thing I have spent most of my life doing, for example outside the academy in the political party I worked for, is, for Alasdaire, totally futile. Probably, even worse, for he might say that sustaining the system by participating in it is worse than getting rid of it altogether. I am rather impatient with this.

R.B.: But, how does he envisage getting out of all the mess induced by the modern condition?

C.T.: He doesn't, if you look at the end of the famous passage in *After Virtue*, the one that refers to St. Benedict, he proposes a retreat to smaller communities which

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keeps something alive but which resign themselves to having no real impact on the surrounding structure which they consider totally unchangeable. This is just like the great medieval monasteries keeping certain elements of ancient culture alive, preserving for us a lot of manuscripts when the whole society around was collapsing. I suppose Alasdaire feels that small communities today can also preserve something important. But I can't agree with all this. Of course, I still have a lot of agreement with him. This is not always noticed because much of his work in America is received warmly by the Right. Because of his anti-modernism he is lapped up by conservatives. But when it comes to social redistribution he is completely out of their camp. This comes through in some throw off remarks concerning Acquinas in *Whose Justice, Which Rationality* and on the kind of limits that he feels we ought to place on capitalism. This is way off what the American Right operates with, i.e. a package where great conservatism in lifestyle issues goes together with what has to be described in international language as Oakshott liberalism, Manchester liberalism, free trade liberalism and is obviously completely against that. That isn't perceived and it doesn't have any impact because having written on that whole area of politics, he doesn't foreground that, as might have been the case were he still involved in supporting some political party's working programme, accepted, legislated and applied it. Since he has taken this decision to step outside all this altogether this has become irrelevant. Anyhow, I still feel very close to the Alasdaire I have always known and sometimes worked with in political movements in the past. I don't think he has really changed at his core.

R.B.: There is a very interesting way in which your discussion of an alternative meta-ethic includes a critique of epistemology. I would like you to talk a bit about that. Before I come to that I want you to go back to the differences between you and, I won't say Rawls, but Rawlsian liberalism and in particular your differences say over procedural liberalism. I don't know whether you would agree with this formulation but I would certainly want your reactions to it. One way of looking at the differences is the following: Let's say there are two features of procedural liberalism, one is that it abstracts from conceptions of the good and the other related aspect, namely that it is difference-blind. Add to these, two more features. One, that it is completely unmindful of or, perhaps not deliberately but unwittingly obscures its connections with its own conception of the good, and second, that it sees itself not as a context based philosophy of public policy but one that is applicable at all times and places, at least in all kinds of liberal societies. Would you agree that if these two aspects are removed from procedural liberalism, you would have little difficulty in accepting some of its guidelines? In other words, in certain contexts it makes perfect sense to abstract from the good and perfectly justified to be difference-blind. At the same time, your position challenges the particular meta-theory from within which procedural liberalism is standardly justified. You also claim for it limited, contextual validity by refusing to see it as a universal, trans-cultural prescriptive norm for all societies. So your real difference—and this is something that critics fail to register—with procedural liberals it is over the two latter features, not over whether or not to have difference-blind policies and you certainly see some value in abstraction, don't you?

C.T.: Absolutely, yes. There are certain contexts in which difference-blindness is what you have to adopt, for example voting rights to people in a democratic society. Here you have to abstract from gender, race etc. So what is the problem? The problem—and I guess it exists on the ultimate ethical level—lies really very, very, deep and this is not brought out enough, and the disagreement is about the very structure of moral thinking. I think procedural liberals are fully situated within the framework of mainstream moral philosophy as it has developed in the Anglo-Saxon world where the battlelines are drawn mainly between utilitarianism and Kantianism. They have been hooked to the notion that moral thinking is an attempt to discover first principles, from which principles one can derive everything that one ought and oughtn't to do. So the search is on for the highest principle. Both Utilitarianism and Kantianism are contestants in that race. Both are believed to give us those first principles. So when they come to politics they think in the same terms. That's what leads to the misunderstanding of my position that you just mentioned. Someone comes along and says that we can solve all these issues by certain basic principles. For example Dworkin's principle of equal concern can resolve issues of individual rights , affirmative action, issues of distribution of income. All these issues can be solved by the same principle. And then I come along and say that this won't work. Because they are so hooked to this way of thinking, I am seen as offering a viable, all applying, single alternative principle. But I am not. I am really challenging this way of thinking.

I also claim that there is no algorithm which can tell us how to pursue them without conflict. Let's say one of the things important to us is justice. Perhaps we could capture what we want to achieve in the area of justice but it must be realized that we are not dealing with just one good and there will be moments when there is bound to be friction, difficulty between justice and other goods. There will be tension between them and we will have to work it out. All you can say in general is that when you get into this kind of conflict you worry about the particular elements of justice at stake here and elements of other goods and very often you will find that you can make a decision because something much more important in the field of, say, comity, is riding on this than it is in the field of justice. In other words, let justice be done till the heavens fall counters the very principle of this kind of reasoning. If justice is going to be done in some absolutely minimal matter but the heavens will not fall, then, let's be real about this, we have to go, perhaps unfortunately with the other good and it is that kind of thinking, as Aristotle points out, which is required. This thinking is not totally arbitrary because we are making judgments of importance. In each case we need fine, nuanced judgment. So that being my conception of thinking. I want to say to them, yes I will take the difference-blind principle in certain areas like voting and so on but there are other areas where we have to work out very deep identity difference between groups in a society where trying to cope with this by retreating to difference-blind ground won't take account of substantive differences in outlooks. This just won't work. There are two ways in which this could go wrong. One is that if people find tremendously important their substantive and particular group identity and if you tell them that our polity will be operated by abstracting from all identities including theirs the possibility of identification becomes difficult. Take the case of Canada. Many liberals and English speakers jeer at the fact that the Quebecois government allows itself to legislate to support the French language and even legislate to send their children to schools where the medium of instruction is French, if the schools are paid for by the state. Here the particular group's conception of the good is supported by the state. If anybody tried to say in virtue of the principle of liberal societies that this is illegitimate then this would be so far away from people's primary concerns that there would be an immediate rift and as a matter of fact we could have immediate separation. So that is one reason why it will not work.

The second is that drawing the line between measures justified by the difference-blind principles and those justified by particular identities is just extremely difficult because these difference-blind principles come in many many versions. It would be amusing if it weren't more tragic, the famous case of the Islamic scarf in French schools where in some cases a strong principled line was taken by disallowing Muslim girls from wearing the head scarf because it is a religious symbol impermissible in a lay school. When some of the spokespersons of the Muslim girls pointed out that other girls were wearing the crucifix they were told that it is a neutral symbol, not religious but aesthetic. They don't realize that this reading makes perfect sense in a society which is Catholic for centuries, where the religiosity of the crucifix fades into the background but it is difficult for Muslims to accept this answer. You will have to rethink the whole thing inflected in this new situation and that whole self-certainty of the French tradition of laicite as being grounded in universal principles must be questioned. The whole thing has to be renegotiated. That brings back in particular identities and destroys any hope of settling the issue by an *a priori* principle. So what really is going on here is a very different meta-ethic, a very different notion of moral reasoning and as long as the unchallenged view remains dominant that we must look for a single principle, then criticisms that others and I make will always be misinterpreted as operating from a rival single principle. What we are saying is that we must limit the writ of any one principle.

R.B.: So we might say that there are two points of disagreement. One, over the form of reasoning—whether it ought to be *a priori* or situational. The other, over deeper meta-ethical pluralism, over the admissibility of several irreducible ethical principles that may come into conflict with each other that forces people to devise various ways of balancing them. The really contentious issue is whether or not to believe in a single formula that enables one principle to override all others.

C.T.: That's right. Another thing is that this runs against the deep underlying rationalism of modern philosophy which has unfortunately worked its way to the political life via legalization, the penetration of politics by legal categories which also pretends to offer this very tight rational argument in favour of principles. So this kind of rationalism makes people think that the Aristotelian kind of thinking is irretrievably sloppy. Their objection is that we cannot have firm conclusions on this basis. However my answer to this objection is that this is the only basis we have. More importantly in the political realm, a clear distinction between reasoning and rhetoric is not always possible because what we are trying to do is to achieve some kind of consensus among conflicting spiritual families and this depends very often more on the rhetorical clothing of these potential agreements than it does on the rational content shorn of these rhetorical clothing. So this neat distinction doesn't always work.

R.B.: We may not be able to make this distinction or stick with it in practice but don't you think rational argument should be distilled from everyday political discourse and a position justified with reference to it?

C.T.: Oh yes. This is very important especially in academic situations but the actual

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success of any position will also depend upon rhetorical clothing.

R.B.: And on a great deal of imagination to get your vision across to the initially unpersuaded or indifferent to it.

C.T.: That's right and one must not be offended by it or think that there is something wrong in doing so.

R.B.: I want to take you back to the issue of pluralism. In India when we speak of pluralism we not only think of different values but also of these values somehow fitting happily with each other to form a harmonious whole. Isn't your perspective on pluralism different, isn't there a great deal of centrality to be placed on conflict in any defensible version of pluralism? Would you agree that there is a tremendous difference between a simple minded pluralism and one that is conflict ridden? How would you characterize this difference? There is another point on which I would like your comment. A lot of people are uneasy with talk of balancing particularly, of a compromise between principles. They disapprove it because they see in it a retreat altogether from a moral position. They confuse it with pragmatic capitulation. I find this surprising because for me three potential situations of compromise need distinguishing. First, when people conflict over issues of self interest. Here there is no issue of morality at all. Second, a conflict that arises between self interest and principles. Here if a principle is compromised to promote self interest then there is a possible moral disaster. Finally, in a third area of conflict between or among principles and any compromise here is to me not morally damaging, even if there exists some overall loss in moral terms.

C.T.: That's right. Seeing the plurality of goods and the tensions among them and seeing that the really moral thing to do is sometimes to make a judgment of exactly where to draw the line. A compromise based on balancing is the key to the whole thing. A good example of this is some of the destructive consequences of political correctness that comes from the same kind of single principle thinking. Consider speech codes on American campuses about how people are to talk with each other, on the epithets and expressions they should use. Well, the idea behind all this is to overcome derogatory terms, to show people respect and this undoubtedly is an important good. But there can also be frank, honest, sincere exchange between one another on what each thinks of the other. No society can operate if you stifle this, particularly in the university, so somewhere along the line we have to mitigate the speech code logic and admit that though some remarks are not ideally suited, not the ideal thing for someone to say to another person, we can't outlaw them without grievously harming the entire atmosphere of exchange. Of course, somewhere along the line we also have to draw limits to free exchange and this is where the Aristotelian kind of thinking helps for it enables us to ask: is this particular epithet really that insulting, must it be ruled out even when it harms the atmosphere of exchange? This kind of thinking is the core of political/ethical thinking. So when people ask what the principle is behind this or that action, the answer is that there isn't a principle covering exactly this judgment because what governs this judgment is where to limit this principle in the face of other principles. So there is no single principle from which this judgment can be derived. This judgment necessarily involves some balancing. People who do not balance are in danger of becoming destructive.

R.B.: It is clear that for you the structure of moral thinking must include reference to the good, indeed not just to one but to several conflicting goods but frequently you appear to be saying that moral thinking is incomplete when it fails to refer to what you call an incomparably higher good. How crucial is this reference? Is it a defining feature, in your view, of all moral thinking or only of certain types of moral outlook?

C.T.: There are two ways in which I have used the notion of an incomparably higher good. It is possible that I have sometimes run them together which has resulted in some confusion. I will take this occasion to clarify the difference. In one I meant a way of getting at what I call strong evaluation, the idea here being that you recognize and acknowledge a good but a good that does not depend on your desiring it. So there is a certain incomparability there between a whole range of things that are utilities or goods because you desire them and this other thing which is taken out of this range. The idea of incomparability implies that these things can't be reduced to the coinage of other desires. This is a crucial feature to note. Now this operation can be repeated also at the level of various goods, at a higher level. So you can have the idea of a super-eminent good which has much greater value compared to other goods. Very many structures of moral thinking have this feature. It can also be higher in the Aristotelian sense in that it is not the sum total of how each of them fit together. Aristotle's eudaimonia—happiness—which is the highest or the supreme good, really what this is is a harmonious fitting together of all the different goods. But either way we have something here which is incomparably higher, something for which you could justify sacrificing one of the lower goods. So again coming back to this Aristotelian context you could justify moderating the degree of fulfillment of a particular good because if you le it go to its fullest, it would undercut the harmonious whole. So this operation o incomparable higherness happens at two levels. However, what this does not d at either level is simply decide the issue of priority with a kind of meat-cleavin principle. See, I think we have got bedeviled by certain modes of thinking and thei various applications. It is thought for instance that if you consider good A highe than good B then your stance must be that as long as you can maximize A at th expense of B you should go on doing that until you can't maximize A anymore. It like saying that if I like bananas better than pears I will just have banana and neve have pears until bananas run out but that's manifestly not the case because in th case of goods as Aristotle very clearly showed it may be that my doing the righ thing is incomparably higher than fulfilling my desire for say food. If I stop eatin altogether the whole thing crumbles. So it has to be a working out of proportion here and how I cope with that, between higher and lower goods as well as betwee goods of the same order. Aristotle is very clear on that, which is why he flogs Plat for pushing his highest good to the point of entirely obliterating certain othe goods.

R.B.: So a certain hierarchy among goods is inescapable in any moral thinking.

C.T.: I think probably it is. Certainly a hierarchy between just mere desires and morality is inescapable. But I think almost everyone believes that things that are morally good are more important than others. This runs against some views fo which A being higher than B simply means maximizing A forever.

R.B.: This is an unfortunate application of weak evaluation to the ethical domain. However, the rejection of weak evaluation in the ethical domain or the acceptance of the distinction between mere desires and strong values does not entail the acceptance of a hierarchy of goods. People may still reject this hierarchy. So to find your views more attractive they must begin to see the element of situational reasoning within the ethical domain.

C.T.: I agree. Another example of how hierarchy is recovered is via what Rawls calls lexical priority. In a way even Habermas accepts this, that the issue of justice is somehow pre-eminent over issues of self-fulfillment. But I doubt if the entire se of demands that flow systematically from concern for justice are to be given systematic priority over the entire set of demands that flow from fulfillment because this fails to take into account the absolutely crucial feature of substantial thinking in Aristotle. If there is a very trivial example of an incomparably higher good placed alongwith a substantive example of a lower realm then we can't just override the lower by the higher. It may be that I consider it more important to say, donate to Oxfam than I care for the concert pianist or philosopher but proper moral thinking cannot forbid me from spending ten dollars on the concert.

R.B.: Would you at this point also clarify your own position vis a vis Isaiah Berlin?

C.T.: I stand with Berlin against these moral maniacs, I mean these people obsesse with single principles. But I am not sure if Berlin himself thought through th complexity of it and there is some exchange between us on this in the book edite by James Tully.[1] I am not saying that he has a clear position different from min only that I don't think he himself has thought it through. He sort of essentializes goods whereas I think of them as capable of development; people can develop new versions of them which can capture better than earlier versions what they were trying to get at. There is a kind of potential evolution or development of good. So when we find ourselves faced with very deep conflict in this historical era, between say demands of modern rationality and demands of romantic self expression that's not the end of the story. We can rethink how we understand these goods in such a way as to attempt to reconcile them.

R.B.: So we are never at the end of the story where we say good A conflicts with good B and that's it, or make an instantaneous balancing, never hoping to move to a better position. In other words, we need to recognize not only the plurality of goods but the possible evolution of goods.

C.T.: And the evolution of our understanding of each of these and a lot of the reasons that drive this evolution are attempts to overcome the really painful dilemmas that they raise. Goods do not have some kind of eternal form in history. It is not as if they are in conflict in a given historical period because of their intrinsic nature. That will be a reification. I don't know if Berlin will in the end subscribe to this but I don't think he thought it through further than standing as critic to the existing, much too simple monism. I think much more needs to be said than this. He believes that I have dreams of reconciliation and indeed I do. In other words,

1. James Tully, (ed.) *Philosophy In An Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor In Question*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

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in the Kantian language, we do need the idea of reason with which to strive to combine these things and not give up too easily. We need an extreme realism about the present situation as well as the idea of reason which will prevent us from taking the existing to be the normal. It is very hard to combine these two and very easy either to just resign yourself to the present or to imagine you have resolved it in some simplistic way.

R.B.: I would like to pick up a question that relates once again to your critique of the structure of moral reasoning that dominates liberal as well as other, more radical discourses. Your critique has a strong ingredient that questions the fundamental assumptions of the entire project of epistemology. You weave this attack on epistemology into an alternative meta-ethical account. Could you spell this out? Another issue that I would like to raise concerns the much talked about distinction between the natural and the human sciences. Your work reestablishes this Diltheyean distinction. Isn't it frequently argued that while your criticism is valid for an earlier crude positivist model of science, the more recent work in the philosophy of science may have made it redundant?

C.T.: Right. I think people are too global in their understanding of this in the sense that there are lots of issues here and not just one as is sometimes made out. If we go back to logical empiricism, for example, to Peter Hempel's original formulations; to the deductive-nomological view of explanation, to the notion of science as the accumulation of generalizations and therefore as related to empirical facts by what I call the beach combing way i.e. collect generalizations and pyramid them to deductive nomological explanations, to the view that science will accumulate once you get rid of superstition and error and finally to the idea that this model will hold also for the human sciences. Now, clearly, more than one thing is wrong with the old model. One is what Thomas Kuhn blew off in his great book where he took on board the older model by claiming that any posing of the problem in science and the attempt to solve it is worked out and expressed within a larger framework. That there is more than one such framework therefore a lot of important shifts in science are shifts in framework and which allow you to ask different leading questions. A footnote to this is that many people including sometimes Kuhn himself thought that there is no rational ground to arbitrate between these frameworks, that people were simply recruited to them. I think one of the great things Alasdaire Macintyre did was to show what was wrong with this. In his essay, published in the *Monist* on the epistemological crisis he pioneered the notion of supercession of frameworks. That was one thing wrong with it and therefore what people have taken away from it is the idea that science is less cumulative which it obviously isn't, that it is less epistemically soundly grounded than the positivists thought to be the case, that it depends a great deal on acceptance of frameworks or sloppily put on the interpretation of things and therefore it operates on the basis of sociological pressure, certain sociological reasons why certain works get accredited. I think all that has some truth in it because you can point to many cases where you can see extra-scientific considerations influencing the domain under study, ideological pulls impinging very strongly, but there are clearly cases where you can see a paradigm shift as so thoroughly justified by the way things are that you couldn't imagine the plausibility of the idea that its all just sociology or ideology. The second thing that I tried to attack in my own Interpretation paper[2] is homogenization of the social and the natural science and this is a second problem that exists or does not exist regardless of the stand you take on the first problem and this second problem relates to the fact that natural science deals with stuff which interpret itself while the human sciences deals with stuff which does not interpret itself and this self interpretation has a tremendously important role to play in what happens. Here too such red herrings were raised such as that this position entails that self interpretations are incorrigible, the fact that I have very deluded ideas about my own honesty or importance and so on, the fact that people are deluded is important. Of course you won't understand the outcome unless you see them as deluded. But their being deluded doesn't stop us from seeing that it is extremely important to understand delusions, to try to grasp why people are doing what they are doing.

R.B.: So this means that this difference is not the same as the first difference but the sloppy use of the term interpretation has blurred this distinction.

C.T.: In fact, two things have tended to blur this difference: one, the sloppy use of the term interpretation covering both paradigm choice and human understanding and the other is the exaggeration of the epistemic fragility of natural sciences on the ground that it is all just, in the end, what people choose to believe, which, therefore, lowering its epistemic solidity makes it look more on par with the epistemic fragility of human sciences and seems there again to wipe out the difference. On these two grounds there is really a big difference. We lose sight of these differences to our peril. Because of the importance of science and its tremendous impact on our lives and the corresponding prestige it gained from it, certain considerations have become absolutely crucial, for example, does this belief fit with our understanding of how we know, or Descartes' way of approaching things: don't ask first of all what things are, what their ontology is, but ask first of all how we can know about their ontology and only then decide how things are like on the basis of a prior theory of how we know things. This has become very deeply embedded in our thinking and explains, for instance, the rise of modern moral skepticism, of various forms of moral relativism and even such things as the priority of the right over the good which I think is partly based on the belief that the difficulties of moral area weigh more heavily on notions of the good life than they do on conception of interpersonal justice. We see how the prioritization of the right over the good proceeds partly from epistemological considerations, from questions like what you can really know and prove. Again the particular contemporary notion in the natural sciences that it all depends on the framework of acceptance, also comes very deeply from some of the most profound structures of modern epistemological thinking. I try to grasp it by calling it representational and mediation thinking, that is we know the world through certain mediating categories/forms. These can take in one case the form of ideas in the Cartesian-Lockean sense: The world out there through these ideas. They can take a post-Kantian form where it is not so much these ideas but certain conceptual schemes or grids that I apply to the world. Everything that I take in comes to me through that grid. Now this mediational notion of knowledge is one that lends itself to the move: How do I know you, or know that I have the same perceptions and views as yours or if we disagree on views it raises the issue how can I possibly convince you. Each of us, as it were is trapped in our mediational structures and that applies itself very easily to modern skepticism about the natural sciences. It seems evident that in the end one scientific thinking is locked within one mediational structure and if there seems more than one then there is no possible argument between one and the other.

R.B.: But this distinction between scheme and content, isn't it compatible with moral realism? And you wouldn't entirely reject this distinction, or would you?

C.T.: No I do not. In fact the attempt to reject this distinction is confused and self destructive. However, what I think is really important is a crucial discovery—Hegel started to do this, Heidegger, Merleau-ponty do it—Elizabeth Anscombe once said that we have an appallingly contemplative view of knowledge. She was right. A critique of this view and knowledge is developed for instance by Heidegger that we are in contact with the world first of all through being in grips with it, involved with it and only then do we develop certain representations, and concepts, mediations and schemata. So these mediations and schemata do not give us the whole story of our epistemic potentiality, of our contact with the world and that therefore we can challenge each other by bringing forward, articulating considerations that others are forced eventually to take account of. We aren't prisoners of our schemata. That's the crucial counter-Cartesian move, against positions set up by Descartes and in different ways by Kant. I have been arguing with Dick Rorty that he is a real prisoner of that Cartesian idea. His rhetoric that there isn't a language that is a language of things is a way of buying into this whole epistemological frame.

R.B.: In other words, there exists an inexhaustible background of practices, of a practical coping with the world from which schemes are built and rebuilt.

C.T.: Yes they can be rebuilt in principle. Our epistemic resources aren't exhausted by any schema.

R.B.: Similarly, in our contact with the world and with another culture what happens very often is that at the level of consciousness we still oppose and fight the explicitly formulated beliefs of other cultures but at another level, in our practical coping with a world we may have begun to share a culture with others; and so to bring down the level of disagreement the challenge before us is to foreground what was hitherto in the background and to revise our scheme and explicit beliefs.

C.T.: That's right. But there can also be conflict which takes new forms because you can be so attached to certain formulations and may find yourself so sucked into this, that you resist change resulting in internal struggles. Or else you can happily go along with them and exist at split levels or finally subtly begin to change your initial formulations, and some of these meanings may change in all sorts of ways.

R.B.: From a pedagogical point of view, if you were to teach a course on overcoming epistemology, who apart from Hegal and Heidegger, would you turn to?

2. The paper referred to is Interpretation and the Sciences of Man, originally in 1971 and reproduced in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, volume II, CUP, 1985.

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C.T.: Heidegger's commentary on Hegel's concept of experience is an important text and so is Hegel's phenomenology and then there is Merleau-ponty's work. There is also the work of Wittgenstein who developed these ideas independently of Heidegger. Then Michael Polanyi who worked out these ideas entirely by himself and later, Marjorie Green. Marjorie had studied in Germany. She knew about Heidegger whom she met and was also impressed by Polanyi. In fact she showed him that he was part of a broader landscape which I don't think he entirely liked. But quite definitely Polanyi's first book was entirely uninfluenced by either Heidegger or Wittgenstein.

R.B.: I wish to change the subject now and get you to speak about communitarianism with which your name has been frequently associated. Allow me to recall your distinction between convergent and shared goods. If I remember correctly, a convergent good is a good towards which different individuals, each with their own distinctive good merely happen to converge upon something which in relevant respects is similar. A shared good on the other hand is worked out together; one can't think of it, even as make believe, as if it were generated and nourished by individuals unrelated to each other. So with that distinction in the background and with your focus on shared goods, many mistakenly believe you to be advocating the view that a community, if it is not to fall apart, must be formed around a thick shared good, around a set of core values. This pits you against liberals who talk the language of individuals with their desires and projects or against pluralists who speak of the necessary diversity of goods in any society. Now on the question of pluralism, a clarification of your position already exists. But this other issue is still terribly misunderstood.

C.T.: And the misunderstanding is multiple because the word communitarian invented by liberals, is used in a number of senses, among which is one you were talking about which is the notion that the whole political society is a community and the other is the multicultural sense that there are these communities of identity that ought to be taken seriously and I think it must be realized that some versions of both of these but not the over simple version ascribed to me is to be taken seriously; also that these two can work in opposite directions. Let me take the first one. Here I believe, not that states as such but democratic states are undoubtedly communities for the well known reason that a democracy requires strong identification or else it begins to fall apart because of the very nature of its legitimacy. We are free or freer through ruling ourselves and as Rousseau showed way back, unless there is a strong identification which he tried to capture by the term the 'general will', there is no answer to the objection that if I am not voted by all of you why am I freer, why am I any more free than when Louis the XIV tells me to do something. The only answer to that is that in some sense your freedom is sustained by our common self governance through these institutions and principles which safeguard our identities so that we can still appeal to them and say that this still is a condition of your freedom even though you disagree; so that is so central to democracy that if you like pre-democratic Austro-Hungarian empires can fail to be communities and can be just loose congeries of different lands brought together under dynastic rule but modern democracies can't. So in that sense I am that kind of a communitarian but my communitarianism is about the health of democracy. Now the reason why the two kinds of communitarianism are run together and the mispreception about my stand on each of them comes from the same error of thinking that communitarianism is simply the moral claim that the community is good for you, so we have community at this or that level but wherever you have it, it is good for you as against the view that being an individual is good for you. If that were the crude statement, then one totally fails to grasp what people like me and Sandel are trying to say which is that certain kinds of communities are indispensable for democracies. As far as I can see this is the only interesting form of communatarianism and this is the level which has emerged now as a major issue. I am in complete sympathy with it and a full blooded communitarian in this sense.

R.B.: But this democratic dimension of communitarianism is not clearly focussed in Michael Sandel's first book which liberals see as the communitarian manifesto and then go on to attack. Read Michael's discussion of friendship in conjunction with Macintyre's eulogy of small communities at the expense of large modern communities in the last chapter of *After Virtue* and you can almost see why a number of liberals could not see the modern democratic aspect of communitarianism.

C.T.: I see. That may have caused some confusion. So there is probably more excuse within the liberal camp (laughter) than I have allowed so far. But let's not forget that one of the points Sandel makes against Rawls is that in order to have the redistributive policies that Rawls needs you will have to have a much stronger degree of mutual commitment than Rawls permits. It could just be thought of as an *ad hominem* argument against Rawls but it can also be thought as a social democratic thinking on redistribution and I am sure that precisely was Michael's concern. The other dimension of communitarianism is the dimension of recognising the importance of communities of identities.

R.B.: Before we move to this other dimension I wish to pursue an earlier point. Even if it is true that we need a common identity to get democracy or even procedural liberalism going, we are still left with the question exactly how this common identity is built. There are three ways in which this may happen. One focusses on strongly shared values. The second, on a common understanding based simply on the fact of living together over a long enough period; as recognizing the existence of a common past. The third is grounded in an allegiance to the rule of law, to a framework of rights, perhaps what Habermas calls constitutional patriotism. The first two are particularist. But the particularist element in the third is very weak, if there at all.

C.T.: I am glad you mention this. Let me begin with Habermas. I think Habermas half recognizes that constitutional patriotism must also have a particularist dimension to it. I can accept the idea of constitutional patriotism if this particularist dimension is fully recognized. The attachment of citizens cannot simply be to principles of democratic rule and constitution. It must also be to a particular historical project. And that's of course what you get in US patriotism. There is a deep attachment to a particular enterprise and a deep sense of mutual commitment among the people.

R.B.: So your views combine the second and the third. A lot of the sophisticated Nehruvians would articulate their attachment in precisely those terms.

C.T.: Exactly. If I am just a totally universal constitutionalist, and if I am no more pained about what is happening in my country than when something goes wrong with another country, then I am just not going to turn out on the street. That's why we need a strong particular attachment and I think that's what Habermas really means by constitutional patriotism. I have read some of his recent stuff more carefully and he says as much. He fudges a little bit, but he says that we must be proud of the particular embodiment of these principles. But then how different is this from a kind of civic nationalism? Not a whole lot I think.

R.B.: Your understanding of Habermas is different then from the standard liberal interpretation of his current writings.

C.T.: I think it is. Something akin to civic nationalism is present in his writings. Of course it is very different from the nationalism of Karadzic where the point is that the Serbs must control things regardless of the means. But it is not all that different from the French or the Danish where the common point is not just their enterprise in constitutional democracy but includes also their culture. The Quebecois are ideologically liberal democratic but also proud of a common legacy, their culture and so on. My argument with Habermas about this is really that one can't totally prescribe from outside what this is going to be like, one can't lecture people that in order to feel a strong sense of commitment to their project, they should not see it as reflecting their culture or their language. You can't lecture them and say that this is illegitimate on the ground that it is terribly important that their patriotism be constitutional. If they are not going to relate to this, if you factor out say the linguistic element then you are heading for political failure. This is where I resolutely will not think purely in terms of general principles but also think in terms of how you embody, embed them historically. I will also bring in the Tocquevillean dimension of how to make all this stable. And the answer is going to vary with different countries. So I am attached to constitutional patriotism if it is allowed itself to extend to different modes of identities and I am for being extremely empirical about this; we have to tailor to the given situation.

R.B.: There has to be a common moral element so that the constitution part of it must be more than *modus vivendi* acceptance but it also must be based on history.

C.T.: Yes. The moral element is significant but the idea that a particular group has been working together over a period of time, is proud of this and its members have a sense of bonding is important too. We can start with the idea of constitutional patriotism and then move out to a penumbra of other kinds of bases. The political core has to be moral but also strongly linked to particular historical project and identities. That's the truth of communitarianism.

R.B.: There is another idea in your work on Canadian constitutionalism where you talk of shared values which are not necessarily shared in the same way.[3] Does this idea have a resonance of overlapping consensus?

3. Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*, McGill-Queens University Press, 1993.

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C.T.: It does, but it is also slightly different because in overlapping consensus we are talking about how the political consensus operates, but there, in the paper you just referred to, there is another kind of a sense of coming together out of difference. In Rawls, we have a sense of what we all share at the level of procedures, whereas I was speaking of different ways of fitting into the same country. We fit differently but that's O.K. because our sense of the tremendous value of this historical alliance of working out together overrides other things. We are glad to make this adjustment because it allows us to operate together in what we think is a great experiment in liberal democracy. We are allowed to inflect it somewhat differently. But you have no idea of the resistance to all this. Perhaps this is true even in India where it is reflected in debates over a common civil code where some people can't stand the idea of being co-citizens are yet interestingly different.

R.B.: In fact the view that we are all Indians but not necessarily in the same way needs to be properly popularized. Since we come from different regions and religions we may connect differently to the same polity. This reconciles the common and the radically different, atleast attempts to do so.

C.T.: Yes I coined this term deep diversity to capture this idea. Deep diversity implies that the actual way in which we fit into the common structure can differ. We are different historical beings, for example the aborigines may have different institutions, different regions can have different status for their languages and so on but we can come to accept value in all this because this is the only defensible way in which we can all be Canadians or Indians.

R.B.: Similarly, since different people have joined the union from different points of departure they cannot be expected to endorse everything that goes into the constitution in the same way.

C.T.: Yes, the demand that they do so can break the country apart.

R.B.: So how would you like to sum up this discussion on communitarianism?

C.T.: There are two interpretations of communitarianism. One stressing political community, the second stressing community of identities. I am for both of these not in virtue of the same reasons. This is why people get confused. I am not arguing for these from the same principle. I am arguing from the plurality of goods. Modern democratic societies need strong community identifications and very often they also need to respect the community identities of its constituents and these two requirements run against each other. The big task is to reconcile them. Indeed it is one of the biggest historical tasks before us.

R.B.: When people try to identify them immediately we may obtain a monstrous ethno-nationalism.

C.T.: Yes, if we put them together in a single coherent whole then we get precisely that which I am very wary of.

R.B.: And one response to it is to deny the value of one or the other. The big temptation is to run away from modern democratic states in favour of smaller communities of identities or to ignore community identities altogether and pin one's hopes exclusively on the common good of a democratic community. These are understandable temptations but both are bound to end in failure.

C.T.: Yes, this brings me back to my critique of Berlin because here we have two goods on a collision course but we can't simply allow ourselves to sit back and accept things as they are. We have to creatively, in new ways invent ways of reconciling them.

R.B.: But even before proper reconciliation is reached, we must have fall back strategies to rely on. Two of these immediately come to mind. Federalism and the right to express cultural particularity.

C.T.: I absolutely agree with that. Both our countries are federal and that's the reason why they have remained intact. For example, the DMK transformed from a separatist party into a party that accepts the Indian union only because it was given its space within which it could govern Tamil Nadu. Any attempt to stifle it could have created a Srilanka like situation.

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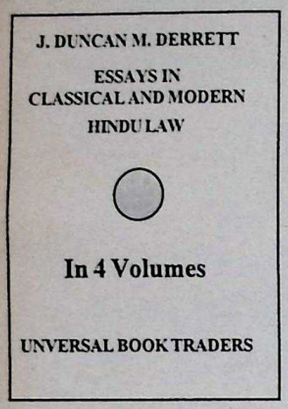

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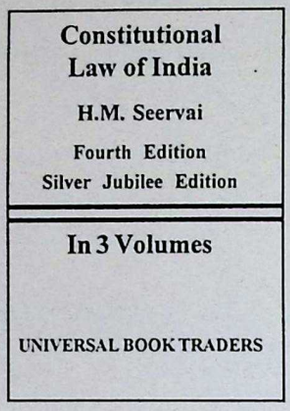

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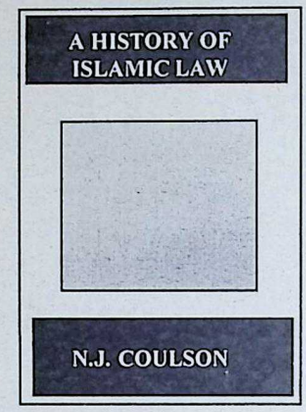

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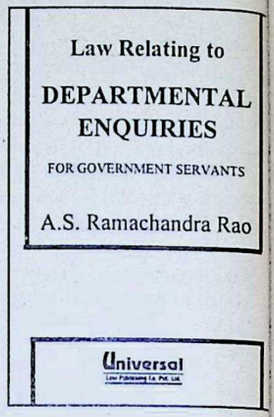

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Universalist Paradigms of Nation and Narration

Shirshendu Chakrabarti

GORA

By Rabindranath Tagore. Translated from the Bengali by Sujit Mukherji

Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 497, Rs. 185.00

The need for systematic and collaborative translation into English of the wealth of Indian literature locked in the regional languages has become particularly urgent in view of the derogatory judgements that continue to be pronounced on it. That such judgements express a cocksure dismissiveness founded on blissful ignorance of the languages and cultural specificities in question is small consolation since they are uttered from pedestals of power and influence. There are at least two major factors that serve to prop up such hauteur. Existing translations are as a rule far from satisfactory, often bordering upon the ridiculous, and there is little likelihood of substantial improvement in the area, given the disorganized state of affairs. Even this new translation of *Gora*, planned for many years, received the Sahitya Akademi imprint, as the acknowledgements indicate, almost by chance and not as part of an ongoing project or programme.

The other factor that confines the regional writer to his own linguistic milieu is tied up with the neo-colonial status and role of the English language in India and elsewhere. Both Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay gave up their initial attempts at writing in English in favour of Bengali, Madhusudan in fact memorably lamenting his earlier deluded neglect of his mother tongue. The wheel seems to have come full circle now, for the present-day regional writer, seeing the instant success registered by fellow-practitioners in the English language, may well be inclined to reverse, in his weaker moments, the historical trend set by Madhusudan and Bankim. Ironically enough, the function of western education, as perceived by Gora in the novel, of nurturing an educated elite alienated from the people, is now carried on unabated in the ideological arena of language. The recent spurt in Indian writing in English is thus not remotely matched by translations from the Indian languages into English. Such translations involve a good knowledge of the Indian language concerned and an even deeper, more intimate, schematic grasp of the target language, English. This double qualification has been met systematically by translators in the domain of European literature, resulting in masterly renderings from one European language into another. As far as Indian literature is concerned, this qualification can be met really by Englishmen provided they succeed in mastering an Indian language. This being not the case, the duty of translating our regional literature into English rests with us, no matter how difficult it is for us to acquire an inside knowledge of the target language.

Written in the historical context of colonial India, *Gora* remains relevant even today not only because of the recent theoretical interest in nation and narration or because the problems of colonialism survive in a disguised and insidious form in modern India but also because of its passionately exploratory urge stemming from and nourishing a warm and inclusive humanity of vision.

Written in the historical context of colonial India, Gora remains relevant even today not only because of the recent theoretical interest in nation and narration or because the problems of colonialism survive in a disguised and insidious form in modern India but also because of its passionately exploratory urge stemming from and nourishing a warm and inclusive humanity of vision. Meenakshi Mukherjee's admirable introduction brings out the complex and comprehensive form of the novel. On the one hand, the theme of colonialism is related to other local tensions of caste, class, gender, and social and religious reform. On the other hand, the massive intellectual structure of contesting ideologies is problematized by an intricate pattern of emotional relationships and loyalities, lightened at times by irony and social satire. 'The articulation of the public domain of debate and the private arena of love, affection and friendship' that M. Mukherjee rightly focuses upon enables Tagore to link political awakening to the stirrings of sexual awakening in some of the younger characters.

As the introduction argues perceptively, the meaning of *Gora* does not lie in individual utterances, but in their dialogical negotiations. If there is an ideal in the novel it is perhaps to be found in the infinite capacity of average humanity for tolerant, caring and transforming love across barriers and divisions, for a continuous giving away of oneself in defiance of the emerging ideology of possessive individualism. The bond between foster-child and foster-parent thus constitutes a *leitmotif*, locating the elusive meaning of Bharatvarsha or India perhaps in a search for meaning manifest in her inexhaustible generosity and hospitality. Tagore uses Bharatvarsha as a heuristic concept, an ongoing and unfinished experiment: it serves as an open gestalt, an inclusiveness that accommodates disparities and differences in its hunger for wholeness, free from the totalizing and homogenizing impulse implicit in colonialism/imperialism as well as nationalism on the European model. Always sceptical of such nationalism, Tagore found the logical outcome of it, three decades after *Gora*, in the barbarism of the Second World War, a crisis of civilization.

The task of the translator of *Gora* is thus a singularly challenging one since he must do justice to a vast range of languages or styles—that of debate, discussion and talk, that of natural description, that of reflection and introspection, that of emotionally charged dialogue and so on. The reader's expectations from the translation under review are whetted by the introduction and the notes. The existing translation of *Gora* was first published by Macmillan and Co., London, in 1924, and subsequently reprinted at regular intervals. There are no notes and no introductory material; not even the name of the translator is mentioned. As Sujit Mukherjee rightly reminds us,

While it is true that the translator must render every word with painstaking care, he must never lose sight of and grip over the totality that he must bring back to life: the translated word is ultimately a means to that end. The meaning of words is subtly altered, modulated and nuanced by the entire interwoven structure of the novel. What seems lexically and locally faithful may well turn out to be insidiously misleading or opaque in its effect.

when *Gora* appeared as a book in 190 many portions of the serialized te were deleted. Visva-Bharati brough out an edition in 1928, restoring som of these deletions. This process wa continued at the time of the *Collecte Works of Rabindranath Tagore* (1941) re sulting in the standard text of the nove That till this new translation by Su Mukherjee no attempt had been mad to use this standard text for translatio is an apt comment on the sad state affairs. Not only does the earlie translation rely on a defective text, bu the style is also uneven and there ar many inaccuracies.

In sharp contrast, Mukherjee translation gives us for the first time complete and unabridged rendering the standard Bangla text', includin useful notes for the non-Bengali or non Indian reader, the target reader in thi case. Unfortunately, however, th translation fails to rise above a some what flat, uninspired, occasionally pe dantic level. On the whole, a misplace scrupulosity has made the translato pay exclusive attention to local accu racy, though there are chinks even i this attention. While it is true that th translator must render every word wit painstaking care, he must never los sight of and grip over the totality tha he must bring back to life: the translate word is ultimately a means to that end The meaning of words is subtly altered modulated and nuanced by the entir interwoven structure of the novel. Wha seems lexically and locally faithful ma well turn out to be insidiously mis leading or opaque in its effect.

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Tagore's remarkably flexible prose moves seamlessly from the sublime to the quotidian, from impassioned belief to ironic scepticism, from argument and stormy debate to bantering small talk, from the cerebral to the emotionally explosive, from the efficiently and briskly descriptive or recapitulatory to the psychologically resonant. Mukherjee's translation is free from the common vice of ornateness and handles the descriptive style efficiently, although the memorable descriptions of nature fostering moods of reflection (as for example, the steamer journey or Gora alone on the banks of the river) are far from adequately translated. Even the brisk and clipped conversational exchanges have often lost their force and sharpness in English. Perhaps the translation, begun as a labour of love, was completed in comparative isolation, and the translator submitted it to the publisher without comparing the total effect of his effort with that of the original.

We may begin with the notes. On page 32, with reference to Gora's mother, Anandamoyi, Mukherjee retains the original word 'Khrishtani' in order to convey the pejorative sense (that 'Christian' would not) and defends his decision in a note. But on page 13, with reference to the same person and in a similar context, he has not retained the same original word 'Khrishtani'. The first reference to Keshab Babu or Keshub Chunder Sen occurs on page 20, but we have to wait for the second reference, on page 38, for the explanatory note. Similarly, when the tuft of hair maintained by Gora at the top of the head as a sign of Hindu orthodoxy is first mentioned (p. 28), neither the original word, 'tiki', is used nor a note appended. These are done, however, on page 79. In the first chapter itself, the sense of the mystical or mysterious that is the burden of the baul's song is somewhat diluted by the crucial omission of the word *'komney'* ('how' or 'in what manner') in translation. On page 28 we are told that Gora 'began each day by taking the dust from his parents' feet'; this is then explained by a note. Since Gora's action is only a more respectful form of *pranam* (the expression, we must not forget, is nearly always synonymous with the ordinary form of *pranam*) the description could have gone to the notes. In the first sentence of the novel, the use of 'Kolikata' and 'Shravan' may seem a bit pretentiously antiquarian to some readers, but the use is ably defended. The policy is not consistently followed, however. Thus, in Chapter 15, while Gora and Binoy talk through the 'moonlit night of Sharat' (p. 86), in Chapter 21, Gora sits alone by the river on 'this autumn night' and not on this 'Hemanta' night; more puzzlingly, in Chapter 20, Sucharita's forehead is compared to the sky of autumn and not the Sharat sky. The novel begins on a Shravan morning but as the day advances it becomes 'this July day' (p. 4).

In general, the passionate intensity and polemical brilliance have been consistently blunted into a kind of academic blandness bordering on the insipid. This is a danger that haunts the Indian translator because almost always he lacks an insider's facility with the English language.

Although examples of minor infelicities and blemishes can hardly be catalogued in this review, and in any case that would amount to a pettiness at odds with the honest attempt to translate a difficult Tagore text, I am worried by the cumulative effect of these blemishes. For instance, was there any need for using the archaism 'wondrous' on page 4? On page 10, should it be 'food meant for outcastes' or 'food cooked by outcastes'? Is 'the altar of the pure-bodied right-minded mistress of a household' (p. 11) an adequate rendering of the original? Two paragraphs later, Binoy speaks: '... the relationship between man and woman can be easy when each is in proper place but we violate this relationship under the influence of passion and give it a false colouring'. Not only does this change the meaning subtly but the style of the entire passage is one of the early instances of opacity in translation. As I move on to page 21, I encounter more serious problems. Gora's excited utterance, 'That is my fully formed Bharat' does not quite convey the sense of Bharat in all her fullness. When he tries to show how people delude themselves that false labour is real work, the reference to *'maan'* or prestige is omitted or rather re-arranged in the verb 'honour'. His question, 'shall we ever generate any real life while we dwell within this mirage', would have been clearer and simpler had the original reference to drawing sustenance been retained. The rendering 'intellect or our emotions' is not inaccurate but somewhat pedantic in its effect since mind and heart would have done the job better. In the light of the chosen and declared policy of translation, the reference to *'karma'* on page 29 should have been followed by one to *'bhakti'* (or 'the doctrine of *bhakti*') instead of 'the access through devotion.' Chapter 8 begins, 'Once this dam had broken', but dams usually burst, don't they? A few lines later, Binoy wants to declare to the world 'one particular proposition'—this can hardly be a translation of *'moner jey kathata'* in the original.

Without proceeding any further in this vein, we could go to Chapter 20, an important one in the novel. In the third paragraph, Gora says, "'I did not cause any hitch on my own. I did so on your request." Surprisingly, the MacMillan translation is closer to the truth: "It was not my objection, but my request, which raised the trouble." Mohim's reply is also not accurately translated: "'Then I plead before you not to cause any hitch, even on request.'" Compare the Macmillan translation: "'...my humble petition is, that you neither object nor make any request.'" Mukherjee restores the allusion to the *Mahabharata* and the Narayani troops (omitted in the earlier translation) but the opposition is between those troops on the Kuru side and Narayan himself (Mukherjee has 'them' for some curious reason) on the Pandava side. On the same page, words like 'ceremony' and 'restrain' and a phrase like 'fastened his tie' appear to be inaccuracies or infelicities. When Binoy and Gora arrive (p. 129), Paresh babu announces their names as Binoy and Gour, and not Gora. The next paragraph is again somewhat awkwardly translated—I am troubled by words like 'hesitation' (would 'confusion' not have been closer to the original?) and phrases like 'the long reading of Haran's English article.' Incidentally, there is no harm in making it clear that the reading was interrupted. Expressions like 'with salivating tongues' or 'strike him with arrow-like statements' (page 130) are far from satisfactory, and on page 131 there is an obviously careless error: *'ateet'* has been rendered as 'of the past', whereas in that context it means 'beyond'. What does one do with sentences like the following: 'Thus we are unable to conceive of distant goals and we don't think it necessary to develop the resources for long trips.'? On page 135, phrases like *'nibhritey thakia'* or *'kaaj koriya jai'* in the original have been left out. The connection of the thread of destiny with fulfilment in the distant future is not 'slender' but 'deep' or 'buried'. One full sentence has not been translated on page 136, but fortunately the omission does not impair the total effect.

The main problem of the translation does not lie in these blemishes. In general, the passionate intensity and polemical brilliance have been consistently blunted into a kind of academic blandness bordering on the insipid. This is a danger that haunts the Indian translator because almost always he lacks an insider's facility with the English language. My initial reaction was thus one of despair since despite the translator's admirable honesty and humility the translation falls short of the original. But perhaps there is a way out of this impasse in collaborative ventures. By this I do not wish to suggest that the translator should be deprived of the solitude that is his due, but certainly he would benefit from the opinion and criticism of competent people he could consult at every stage of his work.

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A Period Piece in Search of Historical Dimensions

Supriya Chaudhury

THOSE DAYS: A NOVEL

By Sunil Gangopadhyay. Translated from the Bengali by Aruna Chakravarti

Penguin India, 1997, pp. 588, Rs. 295.00

Two questions arise in reviewing the English translation of a well-known contemporary novel: one oncerns the novel itself, the other the rengths and limitations of the trans-tion. This is not immediately the case hen the work being translated has ready acquired the status of a classic. he translator's task, too, is doubly ifficult; her success or failure is inex-icably bound up with that of the work, er anxiety regarding its audience more an ever acute and uncertain. Aruna hakravarti's translation of Sunil angopadhyay's *Sei Samay* bears wit-ess in more ways than one to this nxiety.

Re-inscribing his novel to the reader n a postscript added to the second olume in 1982, after it had been seri-lized for nearly two and a half years in ne Bengali weekly *Desh*, Sunil angopadhyay asserted that the novel's ero was time itself. This is true only in n un-Proustian sense, in the sense that istorical novels are about time, or more pecifically, about a time. To the extent hat it is the latter, *Sei Samay* might fit he narrower definition of a period level, hough it undoubtedly aspires to the arger dimensions of the work set in istory, deriving, in Lukacs's words, 'the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age'. It is a novel that has been widely admired in Bengal and outside it, winning the Sahitya Akademi award in 1982: it has also attracted considerable hostility. I myself found it virtually unreadable when it was being serialized at interminable length in *Desh*, and was only partly reconciled to it when it became available in book form. Aruna Chakravarti's translation, *Those Days*, deals with the problem of length by skilful condensation, but adds inevitable questions of translation to the issues posed by the novel: character, anecdote, history, time, realism, representation.

Sunil Gagopadhyay asserted that the novel's hero was time itself. This is true only in an un-Proustian sense, in the sense that historical novels are about time, or more specifically, about a time. To the extent that it is the latter, *Sei Samay* might fit the narrower definition of a period level.

Sei Samay covers three decades between 1840 and 1870, a period roughly characterized as that of the Bengal Renaissance, though its origins might be placed a little earlier. Many of Sunil Gangopadhyay's characters are historical figures: the poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the social reformer and founder of modern Bengali prose, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the philanthropist Rani Rasmoni, the Tagores, Dwarkanath and Debendranath, the nationalist Harish Mukherjee, the educationist David Hare, the Brahmo Samaj radical Keshab Chandra Sen. Many others are present by report or association, some in minor speaking roles, some as icons of a larger cultural history impossible to accommodate within the frame of even this rambling and multitudinous narrative. But centrally the novel is concerned with the fate of a single family, that of the wealthy Ramkamal Sinha, whose son Nabin Kumar is the protagonist of Gangopadhyay's novel both in respect of being its narrative focus and in representing, even embodying, time—or, rather, *a time*.

Nabin Kumar Sinha is possibly the only instance in the book of the novelist's having altered the name of a historical person while retaining most of what is historically attributed to him: the person in this case being Kaliprasanna Sinha, a brilliant and wealthy mid-nineteenth century intellectual who died tragically young at thirty, having translated the *Mahabharata* into Bengali and composed the sharply inventive social satire of *Hutom Pnyachar Naksa*. Since most of what is known of Kaliprasanna's life—his *zamindari* background and wealth, his precocious entry into intellectual life with the founding of the Vidyotsahini Sabha (at the age of thirteen), his involvement in the Bengali theatre and his own plays, his friendships with Harish Mukherjee and the Reverend James Long, and his zeal, inspired by Vidyasagar, for social reform—is attributed to Nabin Kumar in the novel, it is natural to ask why he has been renamed.

Sunil Gangopadhyay's renaming of Kaliprasanna Sinha is at one level a symbolic choice of this figure as the new man (Nabin Kumar) who can serve to represent a new time, both in its promise and its unfulfilment, in its achievement and its tragic incompleteness.

This brings us, I think crucially, to the question of history in this novel. Sunil Gangopadhyay's renaming of Kaliprasanna Sinha is at one level a symbolic choice of this figure as the new man (Nabin Kumar) who can serve to represent a new time, both in its promise and its unfulfilment, in its achievement and its tragic incompleteness. By making this choice he asserts his freedom to re-invent a character about whose life little is known, and to attribute to him a complex of familial and emotional ties which carry the novel's narrative interest.

Yet Nabin Kumar, with his superabundance of intellectual and social gifts, his fabulous wealth and personal charm, with the aura of a mysterious illegitimacy attached to his birth and extraordinary circumstances attending his death, remains a curiously unreal figure. By contrast with most of the other 'historical' persons in the book, he is embedded in a complicated 'novelistic' plot which focuses characteristically on the monetary-sexual conflicts and satisfactions of the Bengali bourgeoisie, and involves two families, that of Ramkamal Sinha and of his friend and lawyer Bidhushekhar Mukherjee. As in Europe, so too in its Bengali mutation, the nineteenth century novel typically expresses the habits and feelings, the nightmares and aspirations of this class; in his novelistic destiny, too, Nabin Kumar carries the burden of history.

The task Sunil Gangopadhyay appeared to have set himself in *Sei Samay* was that of making these two destinies coincide: the road of history and that of genre. His failure can be measured by the extent to which history became anecdote and plot melodrama. The historical persons in the narrative, Madhusudan, Vidyasagar, Dwarkanath, Max Mueller, are crudely typified by 'legendary' details of action or behaviour as they speak and move in an obviously contrived set of circumstances designed to bring them out. Ramkamal Sinha and his 'sons', Ganganarayan and Nabin Kumar, in their sexual and marital relationships, in their association with Bidhushekhar and his daughters, in their dealings with their servants, their estates and their tenants, are intended to exemplify just that nexus of social and familial ties which in some sense constitute the nineteenth century novel's most typical concerns. At the same time they represent the typical life of the wealthy Bengali bourgeoisie, occupied with money and pleasure, yet not insensible to the stirrings of intellectual and moral conscience. The novel is set against the 1857 uprising, against the furore caused by the publication of Dinabandhu Mitra's play *Neel Darpan*, and in the aftermath of the Permanent Settlement. An ambitious project, ambitiously undertaken over nine hundred pages of text, but failing to engage sufficiently either with the claims of history or those of the novel form.

Aruna Chakravarti's translation, too, is readable but flawed. In the first place, the translator seems to have been unable to decide on *how much* to translate. In the first few pages, *bajra*, *gomosta* and *deuri* are unitalicized but glossed in the text; *ukil*, *karta*, *moshai* and *chhoto bou* are footnoted, and *nagras*, *amrita* and *firinghee pathshala* are italicized but unexplained. It is impossible to determine precisely what distinction the translator is making between these differently treated groups of words, all equally mystifying to the non-Indian reader. Spelling, too, is a major difficulty, the *Edinburgh Chronicle* being spelt *Edinborough Chronicle* presumably under the influence of the Bengali transliteration in Sunil's text, and the name of a celebrated nineteenth century physician, Suryakumar Goodeve

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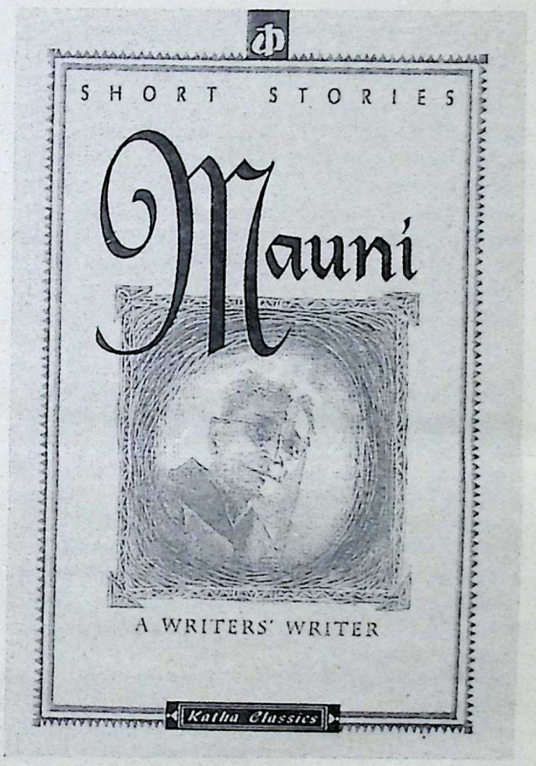
Exploring Man's 'Inner' Spaces

Vijaya Ramaswamy

MAUNI: A WRITER'S WRITER
Translated and edited by Lakshmi Holmstrom
Katha Classics, Katha, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 155, price: Rs. 200



In many respects, and this is a problem for all Indian translators, the translation appears comprehensible enough to the Indian reader who shares a common culture with the Bengali original, but would puzzle anyone else.

Mauni's short stories is one of the most serious collections to hit the Indian literary scene in recent years. The credit for this goes to the Katha team and the dynamism of Geeta Dharmarajan. This reviewer felt that the best tribute one could pay such an important publication was a detailed study of the translations compared at every point by reference to the original text. Looking minutely at the translation of each story one must congratulate Lakshmi Holmstrom on her brilliant translations. I came across an early translation of the story 'Saavil Piranda Srishti' by Kamala Laxman and Adil Jussawalla ('Born of Death' in *New Writing in India* edited by Adil Jussawalla, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977/1974). Comparing Lakshmi's translation of the same story under the title 'From Death, Creation', I found the latter to be infinitely superior and more faithful to Mauni's original text.

Most of Mauni's stories are an exploration of the 'interior', what Tamil literary theorists would translate as the 'aham' mode in contrast to the 'puram' mode with the interior here representing the inner world of human beings. The story 'Images' ('Manakkolam') in the present collection is representative of this exploration of the inner spaces in man within the framework of a virtual non-story. The setting is midnight darkness and a man is thinking and desiring a woman whom he calls Gauri (a recurrent name representing the unattainable female 'other' in quite a few of Mauni's short stories). His shadowy glimpses of Gauri occur when she comes to draw the *'kolam'* before the break of dawn and his vagrant desire is checked by his middle-class awareness of Gauri as his neighbour Subbayyar's wife. There is a meaningful word play and a pun on the word *'kolam'* which refers to the transient 'threshold art' of south India where an intricate pattern made of rice flour is drawn on the threshold everyday only to be erased the next day. Mauni's *'Manakolam'* pertains to the ephemeral patterns drawn by the errant mind. Another story in a similar mode is *'Maaraattam'* ('Mistaken Identity') which has not been included here but which is about a man who chases the main protagonist only to find in the end that it was all a case of mistaken identity. The plot is puerile and the reflections as inchoate as in 'Manakkolam'. The same sleepwalking quality is encountered in *'Manakkottai'* translated here as 'Dream Fort' but meaning literally 'Mind Fort'. Once again the author has taken resource to punning since 'fort' in the story occurs both in the context of an actual historical ruin the hero sets out to see and the forming and erasing of his 'dreamfort' which is a Tamil idiom for wishful thinking. In all three stories it is obvious that the self-reflective subject is the alter-ego of Mauni himself. The last story I would like to include in this particular narrative style of Mauni is the 'Undying Flame' (*'Azhiya Chudar'*) in which a young man fantasizes about his encounter with a young girl (just thirteen) whom he meets later as an unhappily married woman. The whole story is enveloped in the hazy twilight of magic realism. In the context of these four stories I would like to quote a revealing passage from Lakshmi Holmstrom's introduction:

The existential predicament of the West was born out of the post-war scenario when an entire generation felt cheated, lonely and alienated. The finality of the war and the utter disenchantment of the soldier found its echo in the post-war literary scene. In India on the contrary the problem is not one of loneliness but the absence of individual space in a situation of the ubiquitous presence of the family.

"In Mauni's work, the narrator and hero, like Kafka's K, is often a nameless "he", frequently returning to and re-

Chakravarti, being rendered as Surya Kumar *Godiva* Chakraborty! Surely these details could have been checked from standard works of reference? More puzzling are the instances where some ambiguity in the Bengali, possibly indicating ignorance in the author, is compounded by lack of comprehension on the part of the translator. In the Bengali text, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's wife Henrietta is referred to (in the third person) by the English pronunciation of her name, Hen-ri-ett-a. However, when she is directly addressed by Madhusudan, he appears to be employing the French pronunciation, rendered in Bengali as 'A-ri-ette'. This may indicate some confusion on Sunil's part, but it is made wholly absurd by the translator using Henrietta in the third person, and a quite inexplicable 'Auriette' when Madhusudan addresses her.

Equally if not more absurd, is the rendering, virtually on the last pages of the novel, of an exchange between two *babus* which turns on an obscene joke involving an evident mispronunciation of the name of the painter Constable. Either this is authentic, in which case it may have some point in the Bengali text, or the author is in error. In either case, the story lacks a point in English, and could easily have been omitted like so much else in a nine hundred page book here reduced to less than six hundred.

Such jolts to the reader are innumerable, and seriously damage a translation which otherwise conveys an impression of fluency and readability. In many respects, and this is a problem for all Indian translators, the translation appears comprehensible enough to the Indian reader who shares a common culture with the Bengali original, but would puzzle anyone else. It may still be the case that Penguin India's sales are largely confined to India, but surely there must be a larger target readership?

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The 1950's produced the best of Mauni, all of them characterized by his sensitive portrayal of women.

living his past. At another level, Mauni's characters are not merely individuals, but representations of emotional states, areas of consciousness, flickering intimations of the noumenal world."

Shades of pastiche in Mauni? This possibility is suggested by Mauni himself in his interview with Satchidanandan in December 1967 (translated by Lakshmi and reproduced at the end of this book). In his own words:

"Four years ago when we were students, there were several of us who were keen to read and enjoy English literature and world literatures translated into English. And I suppose I started to write as a result of asking myself why I should not try to write in a similar way in Tamil" (emphasis mine).

Jaidev in his book *Culture of Pastiche* (Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla(written in 1993 explored the presence of pastiche especially in the importation of western predicaments and cultural idioms in the writings of leading Hindi writers like Nirmal Verma, Mridula Garg and Krishna Baldev Vaid (wonder why he left out Agneya, the author of the pseudo existentialist text *Apne Apne Ajnabi* translated into English as *To Each His Own Stranger*). Yet Jaidev in his eulogical review of Mauni is willing to overlook the Nirmal Verma like quality in many of these stories (*The Indian Review of Books, vol.* 7, No. I, 1997). It seems to me that the four short stories of Mauni I have been discussing carry the seeds of the same cultural pastiche. The existential predicament of the West was born out of the post-war scenario when an entire generation felt cheated, lonely and alienated. The finality of the war and the utter disenchantment of the soldier found its echo in the post-war literary scene. In India on the contrary the problem is not one of loneliness but the absence of individual space in a situation of the ubiquitous presence of the family. In India this most often meant not the nuclear family but the extended family consisting of grandparents, aunts, and cousins. 'The Family Chariot' which belongs to the early phase of Mauni's writing (1936) points to the tradition of the joint family. However, the four stories grouped together above represent the experimental phase of Mauni's writings. To raise the issue of pastiche in the context of some of Mauni's stories is not to discount their value. One of his most successful stories called 'Transformation' ('*Marudal*') belongs to this same experimental phase. This story is again situated in a twilight zone where the wife lying on one side of the cot, is dead while the man lying beside her belongs to the world of the living. The man, awaiting the arrival of mourning relatives, comes to terms with the transformation that turns the living into the dead. The story which passes through a sharp existential predicament ends brilliantly with the Tamil Brahmin custom of *Sumangali Prarthanai* in which a woman who dies while her husband is still living, is prayed to virtually as an ancestral deity. The wife has been consecrated in the world of the dead while the husband is back in his usual seat in his office.

It is the impression of this reviewer that the 1950's produced the best of Mauni, all of them characterized by his sensitive portrayal of women. The first of these was 'From Death, Creation' published in 1954. The protagonists in this story are Subbayyar, his wife Gauri and the young man who is their travelling companion. The story is a superb example of the exploration of the interior which is really Mauni's forte. Gauri is married to a widower who is more than twenty years her senior. Such marriages were very common among the Tamil Brahmins who lived a life of genteel poverty. They could neither afford to meet dowry demands nor permit their daughter to find her own partner. Notions of middle class morality combined with economic poverty results in the kind of situation in which Gauri, a lively and beautiful young girl, marries the dour, aging Subbayyar. The young man who travels with this ill-matched couple in the train is perhaps the alter ego of Mauni. It is significant that the same triangle gets repeated in' Images' ('*Manakkolam*'). The story is a very sensitive exploration of the selfhood of Gauri caught in the silent cross fire of two antagonistic male egos. The hallmark of the story is its setting in transitory time, transitory space. The title is an intriguing one. While Kamala Laxman, the earlier translator calls it 'Born of Death', Lakshmi chooses to translate '*Saavil Piranda Srishti*' as' 'From Death, Creation'. I would have preferred to translate it as 'Creation Born of Death'. The clue to the title lies in the incoherent and disjointed story narrated by Subbayyar in which among the trinity of Hindu mythology, Brahma the creator and Vishnu the protector rested from their labours while Siva alone carried on his work of destruction, first destroying what had been created and then going on to destroy that which was yet to be born so that when Brahma recommenced his work, creation was already doomed to death. Perhaps the young man perceived this sense of doom in his curious sympathy and love for the young woman caught in an irrevocable, irreversible situation. To quote Mauni: "Sitting opposite her, the young man was wondering if all his hopes of happiness were gone, even before he had been able to formulate them. Has the old devil swallowed up the happiness which belongs to another, even before the latter is aware of it?" (p. 80)

The story 'Beyond Perception' is written in the ironic mode with the husband of Sushila trying to break the ennui of his marriage by getting entangled with another Sushila. The mystique that the chief protagonist Sekharan builds around both these women seemed to be a bit of fine irony on the part of the author. One would like to believe so because Mauni surely does not subscribe to Sekharan's statements about his wife: "When I look at her now, all sorts of thoughts pass through my mind. When a husband looks at his wife boundless notions occur to him. These days my love for her has gone beyond all limits and I have immediately felt afraid..." (p. 100) and elsewhere "as for seeking the womanhood in her, that is a terrifying thing" (ibid). The present reviewer find her hopes belied by the sentence she has encountered on Gauri in 'From Death, Creation'. Here there is no possibility of misreading Mauni since the following platitude by the author is not put into the mouth of any male character but is his own: "Perhaps she (i.e. Gauri) was a reflection of the infinite form of that female principle that embraces the whole world" (p. 79). Such disappointing platitudes coming from a sensitive writer of Mauni's caliber, makes the reviewer acutely aware that she is looking at a male text after all!

In any collection of short stories one is bound to have one's favourite and mine is the story 'The Umbrella's Shelter' published in 1959. To Jones who is a call girl, her chance meeting with Sundaram resulting in her sharing his umbrella is an encounter with innocence. Sundaram's awkwardness and naivete arouses in her a love that lifts her out of the nightmare that constitutes her life as a sex-worker. Interestingly the same incident which ennobles Jones brings Sundaram back to her room eager for the experience of illicit love. Jones leaves town rather than drag him into that shadowy hell in which she lives but the story ends with Sundaram coming back to the room now occupied by another girl. Both the Sundaram of this story and Sekharan of 'Beyond perception' are men who exist in the twilight zone of half-truths.

Finally a few comments on Lakshmi Holmstrom's skills as a translator. The translations are faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the original text. Where she occasionally falls short is in her translation of certain local idioms and expressions. The word 'alienation which she uses in the story' Undying Flame' (p. 44) is a word totally absent in that sense in the original where the author uses the word *'aluppu'* better translated as 'ennui'. A translator has to be extremely cautious while using words like 'alienation' since these are loaded terms. In a few places the author commits the error of omission which takes away some of the original flavour of the text. For example Subbayyar and Gauri take a *'vandi'* to go the station in the story 'From Death, Creation'. The word *'vandi'* refers to a slow mode of transport (either a bullock cart or a horse cart) and is evocative of the locale but Lakshmi in her translation has simply dropped the word.

Mauni: A Writers' Writer on the whole makes for a compulsive read, shades of pastiche notwithstanding.

Vijaya Ramaswamy teaches in Gargi College, University of Delhi and has recently published Walking Naked Women, Society, Spirituality in South India.

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WINTER COMPANIONS AND OTHER STORIES

By Neelam Saran Gour

Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 339, Rs. 200.00

The Indian English literary scene has been flooded with an unprecedented number of collections of short stories in the last decade or so, few of which, however, comprise a uniformly high calibre of fiction. Most, in fact, tend to be mediocre, leaving the reader with a sense of disappointment and ennui. Neelam Saran Gour's recent *Winter Companions and Other Stories* brought out by Penguin is one such collection that may not create waves in the corpus of Indian English fiction but may perhaps add a few more drops to make a mightier ocean!

The eighteen stories that are included in the volume are all, except for one, set either in contemporary urban India or in some of the provincial towns and bazaars of northern India. Gour attempts an exploration of various kinds of human relationships and of the "forging of unexpected emotional bonds between varied and colourful characters" as the back cover claims. The 'human interest' themes of the stories, though not very original, would probably interest most casual readers but for their rendering which leaves much to be desired.

Unfortunately, most of Gour's stories lack the qualities of a tightly-knit plot and a crispness of style that make the short story work. Instead, they tend to be loosely structured narratives that slack-off towards banal endings that prove incapable of clinching the story neatly. The concluding sentences are often quite trite though delivered with a grave air of profundity. Take for instance, pithy comments such as: "And a great moment of wonder, too immense for easy comprehension, came over him," or, "And everything felt vacant, the old game over and the race ended in such ambiguity" either of which could quite easily have concluded any number of stories in the volume. The last paragraph of 'The Department Store', an otherwise comic story of a shopkeeper's miserable failure in his attempts to run a fancy, modern departmental store in the place of the usual 'lalajis' in the provincial Akbarsarai, ends in this manner.

> "The next morning saw Babua behind the counter again, sans assistants and sans optimism. There was only one maxim of commerce here, he had learnt. Let the buyer beware. Let the seller beware. Let man beware of man."

If the motive behind that was to close with some kind of general statement on the 'condition of man,' the only effect it has is of cutting the reader's laugh off rather abruptly.

The use of the English language is also somewhat awkward at places. This is especially apparent when Hindi metaphors and idioms are translated literally into English. How is one to react to idiomatic speech translated as—'salt-betrayer' (for *namak haram*, in case you are wondering!); 'You yesterday-begot *chokra*!' or worse, a villager to his wife: 'Speak, bitch-born!' Unforgivable. Quite unimaginable too until one was actually assaulted in this manner from a printed page (one wonders what the editors at Penguin were doing to allow such embarrassing gaffes to slip through?). Almost equally bad are certain slangs and colloquialisms that are mouthed by quite unlikely characters—'Where did you get these little thingummies that set the machine working?" Babua questions his illiterate assistant; 'Don't crib over fags with me' one Indian officer is ticked off by his companion while watching the border during the Indo-China War. Such expressions read alien to both the characters and the kind of Indian locales they inhabit.

There are occasions where descriptions of places and people run on from paragraph to paragraph, giving no relief to the reader. 'Maybe Next Time' is a particularly bad case where Phillippa Hogarth describes her days in Europe and her association with the famous Henri Rosenbaum during the First World War. The profusion of purple passages (the kindest epithet one can find for them!), narrated in the first person, may have been intended to create the effect of a lonely old woman's obsessive interest in and need to narrate a past that no one else is interested in, but it bores the reader into being alienated from the story. So much so that, it is almost impossible for the reader to sympathize with the protagonist's predicament.

Having said this, let me go on to the

Most of Gour's stories lack the qualities of a tightly-knit plot and a crispness of style that make the short story work. Instead, they tend to be loosely structured narratives that slack-off towards banal endings that prove incapable of clinching the story neatly.

redeeming features of the collection. 'For Your Eyes Only' which flags off the volume is a good enough start with the mysterious attractiveness of a marble statue of Shiva explained concisely and crisply. But the best story is the longish title piece 'Winter Companions.' It explores the growing friendship between two elderly men who first meet while out on a morning walk in a park in Kanpur. It is also the story of Rameshwar Dayal, 75, who though in the habit of avoiding the company of other old people, learns to appreciate the companionship of Saghir Ahmed Siddiqui who is almost as old. This friendship soon proves to be "in some ways the best friendship of his life." Siddiqui's philosophical debunking, his self-reflexive humour and his flamboyant style attract Dayal in spite of himself: "The explosion of eloquence ceased and the strange lighted eyes came to focus sharply on Rameshwar Dayal's tremulous countenance, so insistent, so piercing, that Rameshwar Dayal was indeed compelled to obey their command..." He is strengthened by their mutual resolve to "complete a century" not in years but in kilometres that they can walk together. Siddiqui, more importantly, helps Dayal to exercise the losses and pains of his past and come to terms with his present debilitating weakness and loneliness, his inability to resolve life's metaphysical mysteries: "For my part, RD, I have decided to hold all theories about life in abeyance—sort of suspend philosophy and just drift along... I maintain no steady insistence upon theories about what you call the 'human condition.' Siddiqui's unique plan of helping Dayal to remember his personal almanac even after his own death is touching. And even though Dayal is once again left to face death alone, he values a friendship where "sitting on the bench together, at the far end of life, some things sorted out and a great many left unsorted. . . they tasted a wondrous, simple peace." Their friendship is delineated sympathetically and evocatively by Gour, the simplicity of the narrative a pleasure to read.

'Chandu and the Bissyar' and 'The Department Store' are amusing stories that are comic explorations of the various effects that 'modern,' 'westernized' gadgets have on provincial minds—from a fascinated fear and horror to an equally fascinated obsession with them, ending in a surprisingly quick and easy appropriation for their own use. In each case it is the supposedly ignorant provincial who gains the upper hand, leaving the middlemen (who had dreamt of getting rich with their superior knowledge) hapless victims of communal enterprise!

'The Missing Link' and 'Line Held' are tales of romances gone awry: while the former is well written, the latter tends to melodramatic obsessiveness.

Packaged attractively as it is, one wonders at the kind of readership that *Winter Companions and Other Stories* is targeted at. Is it aimed at a predominantly non-Indian audience or is it meant for a non-Hindi speaking Indian majority? The narratorial strategies employed, or rather the lack of narratorial strategies only expose and highlight the problems that Indian writing in English has been beleaguered with. Settings in provincial India are expressed in an English that is too stiff, awkward and generalized. If the reason for using such de-localized English is to make the contents more accessible to a wider pan-Indian audience, it is somewhat of a poor excuse. Indian English or at times even Hinglish, with all their accompanying problems, may have worked better in some of the stories. At the same time, the volume is peppered with images of India and Indians as enigmatic, mysterious, given to spirituality and so on, all of which fall well within the prescribed parametres of traditional orientalist discourse with no attempts made at questioning or undercutting these problematic projections. Does the problem arise out of Gour's attempt to reach out to too varied an audience at the same time? In which case, she might have done better to root her stories, characters and language more firmly within a specific locale and left the reader to be drawn to it by arousing his/her curiosity and interest.

This collection of short stories might have benefitted somewhat if Gour as an artist had, to steal her own line, "learnt to separate essential lines from the incidental."

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Toward A New 'Orientalism'?

Ashok R. Kelkar

HANDBOOK OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURES OF INDIA
Edited by Nalini Natarajan
Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut & London, 1996, pp. ix + 440, hardback, price not stated.

Time was when even a sophisticated modern Indian was more conversant with contemporary developments in English, or even French or German, literature than with those in regional Indian literatures other than his own, not even in neighbouring ones or in link languages like Hindi or Urdu. There were not too many inter-regional translations or even English translations. (Tagore was a predictable exception.) Bangla and Urdu were particularly remiss, to judge from an old checklist put out by the then National Library of Calcutta. Any literary comparisons were with European languages, as one might expect, rather than with other regional languages. Things are slowly changing for the better: the appearance of surveys like K.M. George's *Comparative Indian Literature* (2v., 1984–5) or *Sahitya Akademi Encyclopaedia* (3v., 1987) or samplers like George's *Masterpieces of Indian Literature* (3v., 1997) or Tharu & Lalitha's *Women Writing in India* (New York & Delhi, 2v., 1993) are indications.

The grass is only slightly less faded on the other side. The old orientalism (whose way was not wholly paved with suspect intentions, *pace* Edward Said) concentrated chiefly on Sanskrit, Pali-Prakrit, or Indo-Persian primary sources, only later extending its purview to old and middle phases of the regional languages. The years after the Second World War saw European academia at a disadvantage (it still is, comparatively), but the United States understandably saw a burgeoning of South Asia studies from the 1960s (with brief gaps in the Kissinger and Reagan eras). There was a distinct shift from the past to the present, from the subcontinent as a whole to its selected regions, and from the humanities (literature, religion, philosophy) to human sciences (ethnicity, economy, society, polity). Non-resident Indians are joining as students or scholars in recent years.

The volume under review falls under the second dispensation (page 16). The contributors are of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi origin, but more than half of them (including the editor) work in North America. They were located "through the usual academic methods of advertisement in the Modern Language Association [of America] and at Sahitya Akademi Conferences in India and through announcements sent to area studies department in the United States as well as other international conferences." The editor hopes that "the basic information on the regional literatures in this book is a stepping-stone to a comparative inquiry" that draws upon literary-textual or socio-historical study and upon intellectual resources of post-modernism (with a dash of neo-Marxism or Feminism) ('metropolitan' is the word) or "more representative and democratic" currents in Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Dalit thought (the word is 'indigenisms').

The intentions are entirely above board if somewhat peccable and the point of view is wholly Eurocentric. The contributors, especially the resident South Asians, do not wholly share this vantage point, but the editor has refrained from interfering with their Indocentricity, inclusive of "the cringe as well as the flab" (in the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee in *The Book Review* August 1997) that too often goes with it. One is quite sympathetic when the editor mildly complains of the "emotive hyperbole" (p. 13). One wishes though that the editor hadn't been so liberal in matters of scholarship and that the promise of reliable information had been kept more assiduously. Thus, *shakti* and *bhakthi* on the same page (294), not to speak of *bakthi* (403) or Max Muller (398), is a case of being sloppy and not 'user-friendly' (2). Terms are carelessly used: 'primary bibliography' for 'works consulted' (407, compare 301), 'academy' for 'academe/academia' (2), 'genre' for 'aesthetic mode' (10, 11, compare 9). Citations are probably not always faithful: 'Hindi/Urdu translations' (261) gets cited as 'Bengali translations' (6) which does not make sense in the context. There are occasional factual inaccuracies: Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay is primarily early 20th century, not 19th century (411, compare 49–50); Premchand did not shift from Urdu to Hindi in 1914 because of the difficulty of finding Urdu publishers thanks to the Hindi-promoting movement (136, cited uncritically at 6); the Tamilnadu street hawkers are of course Banjara/Lambadi and not Gypsy (290). The Index is woefully inadequate: it could do with cross-entries like Anantha Murthy, U.R. see Murthy or Vatsyayan, S.H. see Agyeya; with two separate entries for the Tagores; with additional page listings such as page 172 at *Taledanda*; and with additional entries like one for feminism or for Ezekiel or Arun Kolatkar (both on page 91). If Muktibodh or Nirmal Verma are missing from the Index, that is because they are missing from the chapter on Hindi, which marginalizes Agyeya too. Having done the reviewer's chore of warning unsuspecting readers and reassuring suspicious ones, let me now turn to more substantive matters.

The problem of choosing the centre (Euro/Indo) has already been touched upon. But there are other problems that a historical survey of this kind has to face. To begin with, what is the historical status of the regional identities and the pan-Indian totality in respect of shared consciousness and literary expression. One wishes that the Editor (and Nandi Bhatia writing on Hindi) had rather followed Aijaz Ahmad in his scholarly rigour and intellectual scruple than accept without discussion his avowedly tentative proposals on the problem. Some pioneering work has been passed over in silence: Sujit Mukherjee's *Toward a Literary History of India* (1975) and his Reader *The Idea of an Indian Literature* (1982), as also Amrit Rai's *A House Divided*: The *Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi* (1984). The linguistic and literary regionalization of the Dravidian south was complete by the 11th century with Malayalam separating from Tamil. The Indo-Aryan north first distinguished between the heartland (the home successively of Sanskrit, Pali-Prakrit, Apabhramsa-Avahatta, and Hindi/Hindavi) with fluid boundaries and the margins and then split into regions in the 11th–14th centuries, with the heartland split between a Hindi heritage and a Urdu heritage setting in late 17th century. The cycles of urbanization and ruralization in Indian history had also to do with these processes. The foundations of the unity of the Indian civilization for Indians as well as the rest of the civilized world at the time were laid in Harappan times; Christian missionaries, the print culture, the colonial programs of public instruction, and the anti-colonial revivalist and patriotic urges were working over regionalization and/or integration that was already very much in place.

This volume is addressed as much to the Eurocentric reader as it is to the Indocentric or the neutral readers.

Another problem is that of achieving an encyclopaedic comprehensiveness between the covers of a book. The volume opens with an editorial piece on 'paradigms' and 'contexts'. The first twelve chapters cover the 'post-1900' literatures of the scheduled regional languages (Oriya, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Nepali, and Manipuri got left out) and in English. The remaining four chapters are useful as indicative of possible extrapolations (Dalits in Marathi, Parsis in English, Sanskrit poetics then and now, Bengali commercial and art films drawing upon fictional classics); the Parsi theatre (Urdu and Gujarati by turn) would have been much more interesting though. Considering the practical problems, this is not a bad compromise. (Incidentally, it is time that 'Asamiya' and 'Bangla' replace 'Assamese' and 'Bengali'.)

Speaking of practical problems, achieving a certain homogeneity and level of performance in a collection of invited contributions is not easy and the editor deserves our sympathy. Let me propose a set of criteria for judging individual pieces:

I Sense of the author's extensive and at the same time selectively intensive contact with the body of literature (without which a survey would read like a gazetteer or a panegyric).
II Careful organization chiefly in terms of periods, literary kinds, and movements.
III Sense of contemporary socio-cultural background (after all literature does not exist within a charmed circle).
IV Sense of the pre-20th-century tradition in relation to the literature being reviewed.
V Scholarly care in references, citations, glosses, romanizations, dates or the like.

Using a five-point scale (very good, good, average, below average) for each criterion, one finds that the chapters are, understandably enough, uneven but not outrageously so. I think I could best serve the prospective reader by sticking my teacherly neck out and tabulating my findings. (I hope I am not unconscionably arbitrary in my subjectivity.)

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	I	II	III	IV	V	Global
Nalini N./Introduction	C	B	B	C	B	B
M Barua/Assamese	B	B	B	C	B	B
S Chatterji & H Ferdous/Bengali	B	B	C	C	B	B
A Sharma-Knippling/English	B	B	C	-	C	C
Sarala J M/Gujarati	B	B	C	B	C	B
N Bhatia/Hindi	C	B	C	C	C	C
Ramachandra Deva/Kannada	A	B	B	B	B	A
T Palakeel/Malayalam	A	B	C	B	C	B
S D Deo/Marathi	C	B	B	B	B	B
A Singh/Punjabi	B	B	C	C	C	C
P S Sri/Tamil	D	B	C	C	C	C
G K Subbarayudu & C Vijayasree/Telugu	B	B	B	C	B	B
O Qureshi/Urdu	B	B	B	C	C	B
V Deo/Dalit Marathi	A	B	B	B	B	A
C Vijayasree/Parsi English	B	B	B	B	B	A
Arasu Balan/Sanskrit poetics	C	C	C	C	C	C
M Pati & S Ganguly/Bengali Film & Literature	A	B	C	-	B	B

Finally, this volume is addressed as much to the Eurocentric reader as it is to the Indocentric or the neutral readers. What can any reader possibly gain out of reading it? Actually, it is not even intended to induce the reader to go to selected literary works available to him in some accessible language. If one is *au courant* with all the buzz-words along with their underlying ideology and sufficiently careless about facts and their interpretation, the volume is just grist to the mill; one could even undertake for oneself a socio-historical 'comparative inquiry' on this 'imagined' body of post-1900 'Indian' literature consisting of 'imagined' regions and draw appropriate conclusions in a 'metropolitan' perspective. What about readers whose sights are set somewhat lower?

It will be instructive, and even diverting, to imagine a common scenario for a standard average regional literature in India. The transition from the Medieval to the Modern age has been marked by a shift (i) from verse to verse and prose, (ii) from ornate formality or ardent simplicity (consider riti and bhakti poetry in Hindi) to a causal simplicity, (iii) from bhakti lyricism or mythical-legendary narration to the portrayal of domesticity and public life (reminiscent of the classical Tamil *akam/puram* modalities), (iv) from writing in Sanskrit or Prakrit or Persian about ideas or facts to writing intellectual prose in English or Hindi/Urdu or regional languages, (v) from hereditary professionals or local amateurs staging spectacles for the patron or for the community to the coming of non-hereditary professionals or starry-eyed youth in addition staging dialogues and monologues for a public paying to the shrewd businessman. In this complex transition, the first generation thrives on classical Sanskrit/Perso-Arabic sources or models and/or seeks to emulate the English Romantic Lyricism, Walter Scott's prose and verse narratives, or the Victorian popular romance, or the eighteenth-century narrative realism. The second generation acquires literary self-consciousness, middle-class respectibility, and its own brand of anti-colonial or ethnic fervour; even 'uses' myth or legend or history to comment on the present age; some regions even achieve a viable modern theatre or a consistent vein of humour. The third generation fancies itself more sophisticated by going 'Progressive' (theatre or prose fiction or verse rhetoric in the mode of Ibsen and Shaw or of Brecht or with the ideology of anti-feudalism, anti-capitalism, anti-Brahmanism, or anti-sexism) or going 'modernist' (going to school with Eliot and New Critics, with Camus and Sartre, or even with post-Modernists). Western models naturally do not travel too well. Give or take a decade or two, this overall line of development appears to hold good. There may even be a turn-of-the-century regional literary father figure at hand (G.N. Tripathi, Tagore, Bhai Vir Singh, Iqbal, Vallathol, Bharathi, Kuvempu, or Rayaprolu Subba Rao.) In view of the literary isolation of the regions we lamented at the outset, this sort of what a culture-historian will call 'parallel development' is indeed intriguing, even if one has little doubt about the historical status of 'Indian' literature.

But then there are other rewards too. There is a satisfying chapter here or an inviting nugget there to ruminate over. "Almost all Kannada writers have been highly educated... could get good jobs and did not have to churn out pop writing or eulogize moneyed patrons to make a living" (161). Again, how true is it that "Indo-Muslim culture... had been shared by Hindus and Muslims alike in most of pre-partition India"? [This] statement is patently inaccurate and represents another disingenuous attempt at espousing a superficial secularism (347–8; consider Amrit Rai's more complicated and more nuanced picture.) In a lighter vein: the three "money-spinning" formulae of the Bengali commercial film, one of these featuring "weak (almost infantile) heroes and... their unreasonably devoted women" (411). And of course, the occasi-onal purple patch of post-modernist chic.

Not a bad harvest for a well-meaning but casually conceived book that is serendipitously good, even excellent, in parts.

Ashok R. Kelkar retired as Professor of Linguistics from Deccan College and Pune University and has published extensively in English, Marathi, and Hindi on language, literature, and the sign process together with their philosophical analysis.

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Malayalam Fiction: The New Phase

K. Satchidanandan

Ravi, a bright young scholar discontinues his pursuit of physics in the College to embark on an almost metaphysical voyage of self discovery prompted partly by the remorse of an incestuous affair he had with his stepmother, the discontented second wife of his paralytic father. A typical oriental, striving to integrate Upanishadic wisdom and astrophysical enquiry, Ravi seems to exist on two levels: a mundane, instinctive level of sensuous desire that turns him into a drunkard and a debauch from the standpoint of established social norms, and a transcendental meditative one of detachment and humility. Khasak where he temporarily settles down as a master in a single-teacher school is a placid yet eerie village where fairies mislead the wayfarers along miraculous labyrinths, winged serpents swim in the mirage at noontide, ghosts of horses and warriors gallop across the red hills and godmen and oracles pursue their occult communication with extraterrestrial worlds. Ravi relives his past among those legend-laden hills longing nostalgically for the enchanting fairytales of his lost mother and the love of Padma, his professor's daughter whose platonic relationship with him had taken a romantic turn in his college days. Khasak is peopled by strange characters like Nizam Ali, a trade unionist-turned-godman; Allappicha the Moulvi who would have nothing to do with the *kaffir's* science and the King's angular alphabet being taught at Ravi's school; Madhavan Nair a Communist tailor schooled however in the Vedanta; Sivaraman Nair, a fundamentalist Hindu up in arms against Muslim "intruders"; Appukkili, a dullard with a child's mind hunting for spiders and butterflies; Kuttadan, a temple-priest whose oracular revelations are listened to with awe and Maimuna, the village beauty married to a lame old man. Ravi who leads an amoral life among these characters and falls prey to small-pox that stalks the village to claim a heavy toll, finally meets Padma who reaches Khasak following a clue. Ravi promises her to leave Khasak and does so, ironically by permitting a serpent to "sink his milk-teeth" into his toe. Surrounded by the nascent green grass Ravi lies in the new, white, monsoon rains of Khasak smiling and waiting for his bus to take him across the agonies of existence.

Khasakkinte Itihasam (now a Penguin book, *Legends of Khasak* translated by the author), the silver jubilee of whose publication was celebrated in Kerala in 1994 with discussions and special features in literary journals, may be considered the paradigmatic text of the 60s' fiction in Malayalam. The novel had all the characteristics of 'high modernism': an anti-hero for a schizoid protagonist, a dissociated sensibility and narrative discontinuity, an oppressive sense of the irrational aspiring towards the metaphysical, a preference for abnormal characters and out-of-the-ordinary situations, an interweaving of myth and reality that later came to be labelled 'magical realism', a superimposition of the spiritual over the carnal, a deft play with narrative time, a semi-real space that was more imagined than real and could have existed in dream anywhere on earth and a deep existential angst and an overwhelming sense of tragic helplessness that pervade the narrative, a black humour that further distantiates the fictional world and an intensely innovative idiom that breathes poetry and exults in evocative imagery and metaphoric vitality. O.V. Vijayan himself later wrote a book, *The Saga of the Saga* about the genesis of the novel and 'Khasakiana', already rich, has recently been further enriched by a compilation of comments and articles on the novel published during the last quarter-century. Not that Vijayan and his modernist fraternity have gone uncriticized: the conservatives would not accept their words as fiction proper even. The 'progressives' dubbed them anarchists and reactionaries, amoral nihilists who had championed a 'culture of pastiche' that was to dominate Malayalam fiction for almost two decades. *Khasak's* popularity according to them was a product of wish-fulfilment, its appeasement of perverse libidinal fantasies. An arrogant dismissal of organic and shared culture and ethos, the projection of alienation as a value, fetishization of codes and registers borrowed from the West, stereotyping of characters as identity-seekers in a rootless world of universal absurdity, a morbid obsession with the schizoid, the paranoid, the narcissistic and the hypochondriac: these were the sins of modern fiction as pointed out by its detractors. Some of these charges had also been levelled against the modern poets of the 60s. But it was difficult to deny their understanding of poetic traditions even for those who disagreed with their heterodoxy. With fiction with its brief history, the subversion looked more complete, and the critics were partly true as in stories after stories characters wandered with the question, 'Who am I?' While the poets recognized the cliches and went on changing and evolving new attitudes and styles, many fiction writers began to imitate themselves and got stuck in their stylistic habits. Even Vijayan was unable to repeat the miracle. His later novels, *Gurusagaram* and *Madhuram Gayati* had little that was fresh to offer by way of language. Only in *Dharmapuranam* (The Saga of Dharmapuri) he attempted a mixture of the sublime and the scatological, the spiritual and the sarcastic in order to comment on our grotesque national scenario. In *Pravachakante Vazhi* (The Way of the Prophet) set in the background of the Punjab crisis, Vijayan analyses the elements of urban civilization and problematizes the relation between the State and the Nation. Vijayan's latest novel *Thalamurakal* (Generations) published in 1997 and already hailed as a masterpiece is a semi-autobiographical family saga that travels back and forth in time breaking the linear narrative in an attempt to create a manageable pattern from a heap of memories about the generation of the Ponmudi household. Chamiyarappan in the novel is a complex character, witness to a whole historical period of subjective and subjective transformations through whose uneasy consciousness the narrative embraces a range of times and climes. Krishnan, who after a period of intense spiritual search and study realises the futility of life and of knowledge, Gopalan who after his studies in England becomes a Muslim convert, marries a Jewish woman and ends up in Hitler's gas chamber, Chandran and Rosemary who drive into death are all victims of a curse that is passed on from one generation to the other. Vijayan's myth-making imagination weaves legends, personal memories and political experiences together into a unique saga of sin and deliverance whose subtexts will continue to be read by critics in a hundred different ways.

Kakkanadan, M. Mukundan, Sethu, Punathil Kunhabdulla, M.P. Narayana Pillai, Paul Zachariah, K.P. Nirmalkumar, T.R.: these were some of the major writers to be elevated with Vijayan in the sixties to glory and martyrdom. As in poetry, in fiction too the New coexisted with the Old. In fact some of the masterpieces of Malayalam novel by writers who are not generally qualified as 'modern' (though I for one would certainly consider a writer like Basheer absolutely modern) were produced during the 'modernist' decades: *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* (The Beautiful and the Handsome by 'Uroob', *Pathummayude Adu* (Pathumma's Goat) by Vaikom Mohammed Basheer, *Oru Desathinte Katha* (The Story of A Village) by S.K. Pottekkat, *Randamoozham* (The Second Turn) by M.T. Vasudevan Nair, *Kayar* (Coir) by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and *Thattakam* (Own Place) by Kovilan being some of them.

The accusation of mere imitation of the West, of 'cultural pastiche' can hardly be raised against the best novels modernism has produced. Even Vijayan obviously influenced by western authors had given the modernist codes 'a local habitation and a name' by setting his *Khasakkinte Itihasam* in a Palgha

The accusation of mere imitation of the West, of 'cultural pastiche' can hardly be raised against the best novels modernism has produced. Even Vijayan obviously influenced by western authors had given the modernist codes 'a local habitation and a name' by setting his *Khasakkinte Itihasam* in a Palghat village and making use of caste-structures, rural rituals, archetypes and the tragi-comic modernist vision as say, U.R. Anantha Murthy had done in his *Samskara*.

***Khasakkinte Itihasam* (now a Penguin book, *Legends of Khasak* translated by the author), the silver jubilee of whose publication was celebrated in Kerala in 1994 with discussions and special features in literary journals, may be considered the paradigmatic text of the 60s' fiction in Malayalam.**

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village and making use of caste-structures, rural rituals, archetypes and the tragi-comic modernist vision as say, U.R. Anantha Murthy had done in his *Samskara*. His later novels are even more indigenous in theme and vision. Kakkanadan's *Ushnamekhala* (The Tropical Zone) dealt with the diabolic world of contemporary *realpolitik* and the frustration of a generation in Kerala that was nourished on communist values and found itself betrayed. M. Mukundan's *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* (On the Banks of River Mayyazhi) is a semi-historical novel that depicts the recent history of Mahe, a former French colony in North Malabar: a novel he has followed up with a second part, *Daivathinte Vikrutikal* (The Pranks of God). His latest novels *Adityanum Radhayum* (Adityan and Radha) and *Oru Dalit Yuvatiyude Kadanakatha* (The Sad Tale of a Dalit Woman) have been hailed as the harbingers of post-modernism by some contemporary critics chiefly because of their narrative techniques.

Anand (P. Sachidanandan) is another major writer whose novels inevitably have a pan-Indian character and are set outside Kerala. A penetrating critique of our State and society emerges from his tragic contemplative narratives like *Alkkoottam* (The Crowd), *Abhayarthikal* (The Refugees), *Marana Certificates* (The Death Certificate) *Marubhoomikal Undakunnathu* (How Deserts are Made) and *Govardhante Yatrakal* (The Journeys of Govardhan). These last two novels are particularly intense as his philosophic despair discovers an adequate language in these narratives/metanarratives that construct imaginary spaces, theatres of a gory history ultimately producing only death and refugees ever on the run. Anand in some sense is Vijayan's 'other' in Malayalam fiction, and Govardhan, the protagonist of his latest novel a character created by Bharatendu Harishchandra who escapes jail to wander along several epochs of Indian history in search of a meaning complements/contradicts Vijayan's Ravi who celebrates ahistoricity though both finally arrive at the same dead end of absurdity. It is significant that Anand's reason lead him to the same realization as Vijayan's unreason. Punathil Kunhabdulla's *Smaraka Silakal* (The Tombstones) and Sethu's *Pandavapuram* are two other significant works in this genre. V.K.N. with his inimitable humour that springs partly from his observation of contemporary life and partly from his unique play with language as for example in *Arohanam* (The Ascent), *Kavi* (The Saffron) and N.P. Muhammad with his insight into the Muslim community of Kerala and visions of childhood as in *Daivattinte Kannu* (God's Eye) are two other significant modernists seldom recognized as such.

N.S. Madhavan whose second collection of stories, *Higuitta*, published after a gap of twelve years after his first, *Choolaimedile Savangal* (The Corpses of Choolaimedu) has been widely noticed as perhaps the most consummate artist among the short story writers to emerge after O.V. Vijayan and Paul Zachariah. Sharp, witty, committed in a broad sense and full of psychological insight, his stories have invented a dense new idiom fit to capture the dread and agony of being a thinking Indian today.

Existential and ontological issues like anonymity and identity, solitude and angst, were the recurring themes also of the short fiction of the 60s. The change from the social to the existential had already been heralded by transitional writers like T. Patmanabhan, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, C. Radhakrishnan and Madhavikkutty (Kamala Das). The new themes also brought in new forms: Kafkaesque allegories, epistolatory narratives, dramatic monologues, stream of consciouness, surrealistic fantasies, didactic-looking satires, essay-like expositions, single-image stories, micro-tales, fables: the revolt against the naturalistic narratives of the Progressive decades was complete.

A partial politicization of the modern sensibility of a radical kind occurred in fiction in the seventies: M. Sukumaran with his allegories of class combats, Pattathuvila Karunakaran with his penetrating satires demythifying the bourgeoisie, U.P. Jayaraj and P.K. Nanau with their unwavering sympathy for the radical activists and N.S. Madhavan with his subtle and indirect depiction of the culture of silence were in various ways responsible for this new growth which rather than replacing the erstwhile mainstream was enveloped and to some extent contained by it. In poetry the shift had been near-complete because most of the poets of the mainstream modernism had been converted and even the rest remained sympathetic; but in short story, the pioneers remained untouched or were too exhausted to attempt a change. The orthodox Marxists who had always been critical of the modernists too would not approve of the new stream; they rather considered it the opening of a second ideological battle front. They had groomed their own poets and fiction writers; but they were by simple lack of talent unable to combat the modernists with their superior creativity and penchant for innovation. By the end of the seventies however the mainstream modernism began to show signs of decay: the breakthrough became a cliche; anomalous characters degenerated into stereotypes, the uninhibited forays into sexuality bordered on the pornographic, the expression of solitude became solipsis and claustrophilia. On the scene there already had been one group of writers—P. Vatsala, C.V. Sreeraman, C. Radhakrishnan, Vaisakhan, S.V. Venugopan Nair, E. Harikumar, Mundur Krishnankutty, Gautaman, Satrughnan and (late) V.P. Sivakumar among them—who had chosen not to be yoked with the modernists and were happy with their middle-brow readership; they were now joined by a whole young generation who called themselves 'anti-modernists'. C.R. Parameswaran with his powerful novel *Prakriti Niyamam* (Law of Nature) that depicts the decay of Communism in Kerala and C.V. Balakrishnan with his *Ayussinte Pustakam* (The Book of Life) that with its biblical simplicity of idiom was a real stylistic breakthrough, were two of the best talents of the generation. V.R. Sudheesh, N. Prabhakaran, P. Surendran, Asokan Cheruvil, T.V. Kochubava, P. Ramanunni, Ashtamoorty, George Joseph K., N.P. Hafiz Muhammad, V.S. Anil Kumar, M. Sudhakaran, K. Raghunathan, M.A. Rahman, Sihabuddeen... this growing tribe just loves to tell human stories free from conscious ideological preoccupations. All of them have published at least one collection of stories each. Some of them like T.V. Kochubava, P. Surendran and P. Ramanunni have also attempted novels (eg. *Vriddhasadanam*, *Mayapuranam* and *Sufi Paranha Katha*, respectively) though this generation, one feels, is yet to master the art of the longer narrative. N.S. Madhavan whose second collection of stories, *Higuitta*, published after a gap of twelve years after his first, *Choolaimedile Savangal* (The Corpses of Choolaimedu) has been widely noticed as perhaps the most consummate artist among the short story writers to emerge after O.V. Vijayan and Paul Zachariah. Sharp, witty, committed in a broad sense and full of psychological insight, his stories have invented a dense new idiom fit to capture the dread and agony of being a thinking Indian today. His third collection, *Thiruthu* (The Correction) is even more political in nature, the title story being a passionate and painful response to the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

Woman's fiction that has a strong tradition in Malayalam right from the days of Lalitambika Antarjanam (b. 1909)—whose *Agnisakshi* has been translated into English—, K. Saraswati Amma (1919–74) and Rajalakshmi (1930–69) has found its greatest successor in Madhavikkutty (Kamala Das), who though not a male-baiter like Saraswati Amma, reveals the feminine unconscious with its suppressed longings and its long-borne scars. The *ecriture feminine* in the language is further being enriched by writers like Sarah Joseph, Manasi and Gracy with whom the revolt against the 'phallogocentric' patriarchal order has taken a more violent and wilful turn. Sarah Joseph's stories on Mary, Sita and Soorpanakha are fine examples of what Alicia Ostriker terms 'revisionist myth-making', a deconstructive reversal of the patriarchal logic of status-quoist myths. Chandramati and Ashita who refuse to be labelled 'feminists' respond to their life as women in different ways. Chandramathi's stories collected in *Aryavartam* and *Deveegramam* are sharp and ironic while Ashita's stories collected in *Ashitayute Kathakal* are tender and sad.

Contemporary fiction in Malayalam is yet to get the national and international attention that is due to it. True, in the recent years a few significant novels found readable English translations like Thakazhi's *Kayar* (Sahitya Akademi), O.V. Vijayan's *Legends of Khasak, Saga of Dharmapuri, After Hanging and Other Stories, The Sea of Grace* (Penguin India), Anand's *Death Certificate* (Orient Longman), Paul Zachariah's *Bhaskara Pattelar and Other Stories* (Affiliated East West), N.P. Mohammed's *The Eye of God*, Madampu Kunjukuttan's *Outcaste* and M.T. Vasudevan Nair's *The Second Turn* (Macmillan India). A few Malayalam short stories by women writers have been brought out by Kali for Women under the title *Inner Spaces* and a few outstanding stories have appeared in different volumes of *Katha Prize Stories*. *Indian Literature* has also brought out two special issues on Malayalam short story. However, a lot of contemporary masterpieces are yet awaiting their translators and publishers.

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Mirroring Society

Ranjana Kaul

DEAD END

By Ajeet Cour

Sterling Publishers, 1997, New Delhi, pp. 142, Rs. 90.00

ECHOES AND SHADOWS

By Shivnath

Sahitya Akademi, 1992, New Delhi, pp. 193, Rs. 75.00

VOX 2

Edited by Jeet Thayil

Sterling Newspapers, 1997, Mumbai, pp. 182, Rs. 125.00

The short story as a consciously developed genre has a relatively brief history of around a hundred and fifty years though it is one of the most ancient forms of narrative prose. In India, the history of short story writing goes back to around the beginning of the century when writers in Hindi, Urdu and some regional languages used it to address their concerns about social issues and the rapidly changing milieu around them. The works of writers such as Premchand and Saadat Hasan Manto illustrate the dexterity and force with which a short story writer could deal with complex and topical themes ranging from nationalism and the condition of women in society to a vivid representation of the less appealing aspects of human nature. The short story was often used as a means of conveying a political or ideological agenda and there was a growing movement towards realism.

The works of writers such as Premchand and Saadat Hasan Manto illustrate the dexterity and force with which a short story writer could deal with complex and topical themes ranging from nationalism and the condition of women in society to a vivid representation of the less appealing aspects of human nature.

Over the years the genre has been used innovatively and experimentally to represent the fractured and intensely personalized experiences of modern life. But though the individual is often the focal point of the modern short story it is evident, from looking at recent collections of short stories published in India, that it has also continued to be a very forceful medium to compel the reader to confront the injustice and oppression which he so often takes for granted or ignores.

In her collection of stories entitled *Dead End* Ajeet Cour displays an amazing range and grasp of human emotions and social realities. Her stories offer a penetrating and satiric unveiling of the hypocrisies of social behaviour as well as a sympathetic yet unsentimental look at the lives of the oppressed and the ordinary people. In the very first story, 'Ali Baba's Death', the suicide of the clerk Ram Lal brings home the helplessness of a man who is merely a cog in the giant wheel of bureaucracy, a man with almost no standing in society. For him there are no choices because he is a man with a conscience. Unlike Ram Lal, Kapoor in 'Happy New Year' is all set to celebrate his elevation to the rank of Private Secretary to the Honourable Minister. This symbol of lower middle class respectability who is living a hand to mouth existence consoles himself with the bottle of booze he has received as his first bribe and the thought that in future he will be able to celebrate New Year like other rich folk.

Some of the stories in [*Dead End*] give a moving rendition of the fragile inner spaces which constitute the heart and soul of a human being. 'Returning Home' is a story of almost lyrical beauty focusing on the protagonist's memories of a grandfather who was blessed with a childlike capacity for joy and a naive and untrammelled sense of oneness with the universe and God.

Many stories in the collection including 'Initiation', 'The Other Woman' and 'Bloodhounds' offer a searching indictment of the position of women in society and also of the collapse of a system which can offer them no protection but instead takes on the role of an oppressor. The young girl in 'Initiation' is crippled by the unnecessary and cruel restrictions imposed on her which she cannot comprehend. The author's comment that "the parents of a girl child make their girls grow in small pots which can just be carried from one drawing room to another" vividly encapsulates the traditional image of the Indian woman whose growth is stunted from childhood and who is expected to fit herself into every household of which she inadvertently finds herself a part. An image which is further reinforced by the helplessness and despondency of the women protagonists in 'The Other Woman'.

Some of the stories in the collection give a moving rendition of the fragile inner spaces which constitute the heart and soul of a human being. 'Returning Home' is a story of almost lyrical beauty focusing on the protagonist's memories of a grandfather who was blessed with a childlike capacity for joy and a naive and untrammelled sense of oneness with the universe and God. On one level it is a story about the neglect and emotional isolation which is so often the lot of many aged parents but it is also the story of a man who refuses to let people and circumstances tarnish his private universe, 'Maami' is another story about neglect and isolation and also about love. The old woman who has been spurned throughout her life finds herself unable to bear the happiness of one heartfelt gesture of affe tion.

'Dead End' like 'Bloodhounds' is s against the backdrop of political u heaval and illustrates its impact on i dividuals. It also emphasizes the asto ishing manner in which circumstance can change our perceptions of oth people. In a seamless rendering of co nections, the young extremist in th story is transformed from the possibl killer of the only son of the family int just another suffering and terro stricken young man. The mother's an guished cry at the end encompasses th overwhelming irony of a system i which the same human being can be come the hunter and the hunted, th murderer and the victim. Despite th relentlessly serious thematic concern many of the stories in the collection als reveal the basic humanity and capacit to dream and enjoy which even a beg gar or a dying man cannot be denied The impact of the stories is furthe heightened by the excellent quality o the translations the best of which are b the author herself.

An unevenness of style and languag unfortunately mars the translations o Dogri stories in the collection *Echoes an Shadows*. These are mostly stories abou ordinary people, ordinary lives and or dinary happenings but in each case th writer forces the reader to look mor closely and with a heightened sense o perception at those everyday experi ences which he so often takes for granted.

Though only two of the stories ar written by women, a surprisingly large number of them deal with themes re lated to women and their position i society. In 'An Autumn Leaf', 'The Story of the Hills' and 'The Hanging Corpse' the woman is seen as the victim o fraud, of injustice and of a social system which denies her any control over he own destiny. She is honour bound t destroy herself like Magoo Masi o Parma's wife if she is compromised the only other alternative is to prosti tute herself like Durga in order to sur vive. 'The Farm' is a chilling story, al most Orwellian in its portrayal of complex and established system of ex ploitation of women. A system which is so deeply entrenched that no on questions its existence, not even th sufferers themselves.

The only stories in the collectio which endow women with some powe are, 'Last Rites' and 'Caretaker' Bhakkaru is a survivor and she is de termined to see to it that her son Bind receives his last rites even if she ulti mately has to bury him herself. Sarwa in Padma Sachdev's 'Caretaker' finally comes to realize that her 'rival' Nuri is merely the victim of a lopsided tradi

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The fragility of human relationships and the ease with which dreams are shattered becomes the theme of 'Black Moon', an extremely perceptive story which lays bare the illusions which motivate so many human actions and relationships.

tion which marries off young girls to boys far younger than themselves. Her final choice redeems her both as a woman and a human being.

Stories like 'Self Sacrifice' bring out the sheer misery of genteel poverty. In society appearances are important and the death of a man offers the only prospect of hope for a family with unmarried daughters and unemployed sons. Kant Babu's agonizing recognition of the fact that he is of infinitely greater value to his family dead than alive is the focal point of the story. It is only by dying that he can finally prove himself to be a good and responsible father. The other stories in the collection range from science fiction to highly symbolic representations of the human condition. The variety of themes taken from Dogri life give the reader an interesting glimpse of contemporary social and literary concerns.

In recent years a number of excellent anthologies of short stories have been published in English including the Katha collection of prize winning stories which has been published every year since 1990. In the field of women's writing Kali for Women has brought out some interesting and stimulating collections in which women writers have dealt with an amazing variety of social and personal issues. *Vox* 2 is the third in the Sterling Newspaper Series of new Indian fiction and is a significant addition to the literary scene. This well chosen collection of stories reflects the immense diversity of life in the modern world. The stories deal with the theme of love; the loss, the suffering and the almost Bacchanalian exhilaration which are some of the myriad facets of the emotion.

The fragility of human relationships and the ease with which dreams are shattered becomes the theme of 'Black Moon', an extremely perceptive story which lays bare the illusions which motivate so many human actions and relationships. The tawdriness of the Raja's bedroom hastens the young bride's descent from romance to reality as she confronts a future with a man she no longer recognizes as her romantic ideal. 'Reception Room', a very different story, displays the same sensitivity in its portrayal of the tenuous bonds of affection which have gradually grown between a young officer and the old woman who visits his office in search of assistance.

The seven stories in the volume deal with 'the paroxysms of our time in ways direct and oblique' and perhaps one of the major upheavals in modern life has been the slow and incipient dissolution of human relationships and the growing inability to communicate which brings us so close to annihilation. Nirmal Verma's story 'Spaces Between Us' is a chilling chronicle of the atrophying of emotions. These are characters who belong to the same family, occupy the same space but have no point of contact. 'Pandora's Box' and 'Six Inches' offer an insight into unconventional aspects of love which nevertheless descend into the mundane despite stylistic innovations. One of the most intriguing stories in the collection, 'Bokha', is an amazing amalgam of a horror story and a tale of twisted love between a humorous woman and her unprepossessing son. It is also the story of Bokha's love for the gentle maid Seraphina which ultimately forces him to sever the ties of love and fear which bind him to his mother.

This impressive collection includes the works of two Sahitya Akademi and one Jnanpith award winner and though all the stories are not of the same calibre it offers an excellent opportunity to acquaint oneself with the works of some of the best Indian writers of fiction today.

Ranjana Kaul has been teaching English at a Delhi University College for the past sixteen years. She has an abiding interest in Indian English writing and in English translations of literature written in regional languages.

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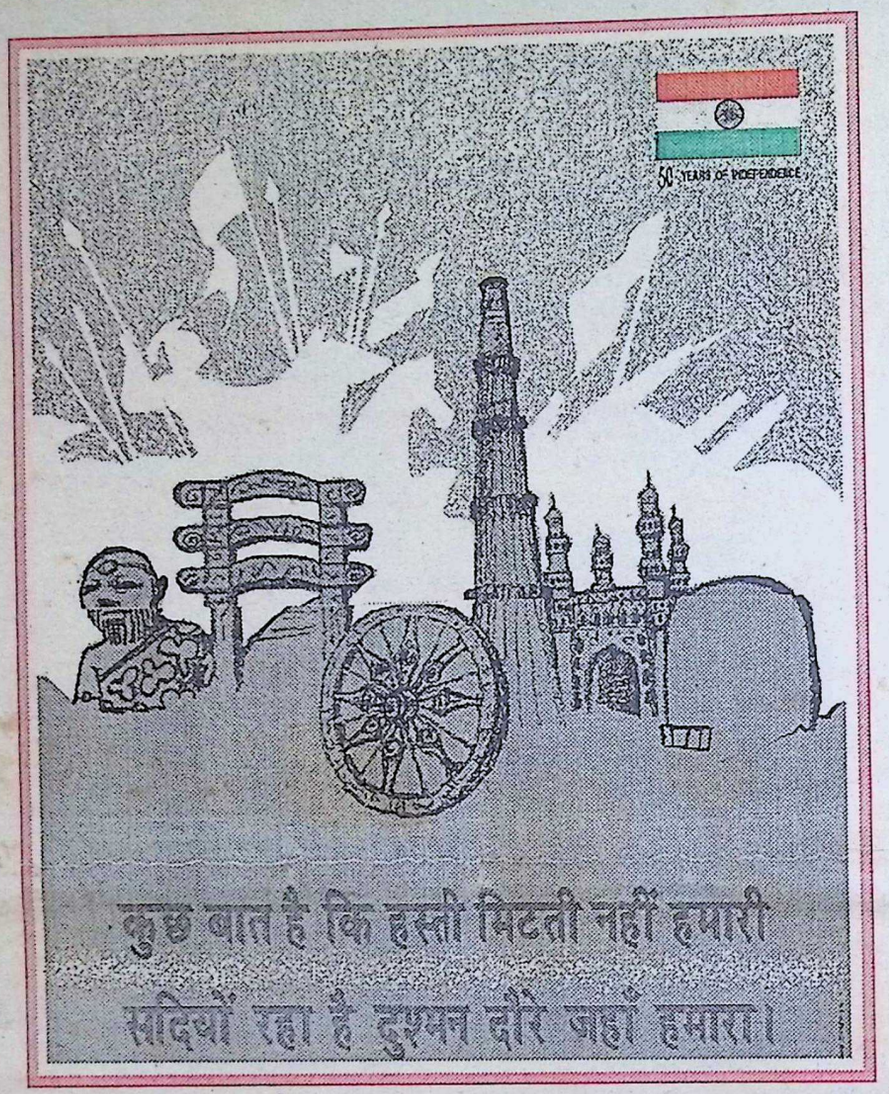

Iqbal (1877-1938), in this couplet from his famous poem, *Saare Jahan Se Achcha*, salutes the immortal soul of India: *There is something about our country which is beyond time and space—something that has made us stand firm and united in the face of centuries of hostility, both from within and without.*

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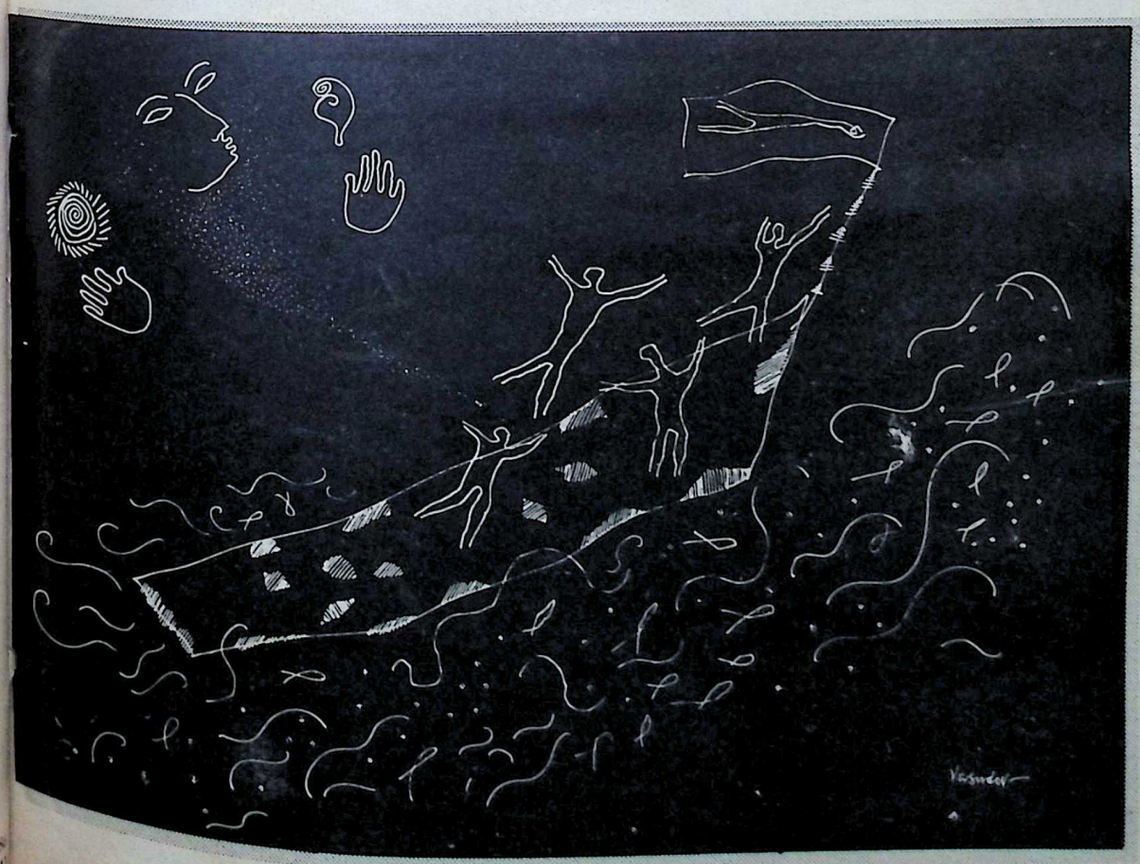

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A Benchmark Study

Mahesh Buch

SUBALTERNS AND SOVEREIGNS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL HISTORY OF BASTAR 1854–1996

By Nandini Sundar

Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 296, Rs. 495.00

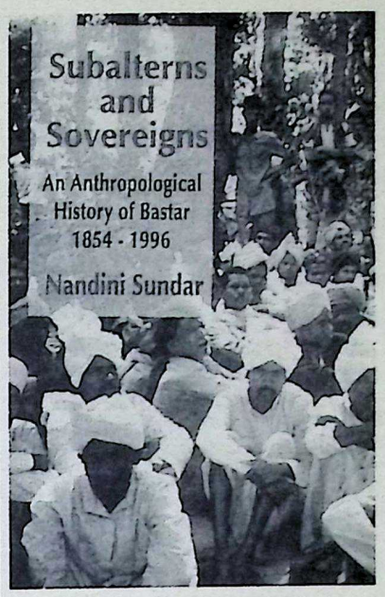
Bastar has always held a fascination for anthropologists, because of its remoteness, the presence of the tribes whose origin is largely Gondi, the social customs and the impact of outside influences on the people and the area. Verrier Elwin spent almost a lifetime studying the Hill Madias, largely in the Abujhmad area. Dr. Sankalia made a study of Lanka, again in Abujhmad, to see whether this was the Lanka referred to in the *Ramayana*. Though a geographer by calling, Shankar Tiwari made a deep study of the Kanger Valley, one of the most beautiful regions in the whole of India. The latest in this series of studies of Bastar is the book *Subalterns and Sovereigns*, written by Nandini Sundar. No review of this book can start with anything but a compliment to the author for the extremely readable style in which it has been written, thus saving it from the onus of dullness which is the hallmark of many serious studies. Bastar and its past come to life through the able penmanship of Nandini Sundar.

The author has looked at two aspects of change in Bastar, the first relating to insertion of Bastar into a capitalist framework; and the second relating to the super-imposition of concepts of governance relevant to a non-tribal society into what is basically a tribal society. These are points of friction which have generated conflict and led to a series of resistances and rebellions in Bastar.

The fact that she has been somewhat influenced by the thinking of Dr. B.D. Sharma, a figure of great controversy in Bastar, does not detract from the merits of the book, but it tends to give it a certain underlying bias. Perhaps this bias would have come in any case because the non-tribal intruders in Bastar have not always been kind to the tribals. One of the interesting points made by the author in the Introduction is that whereas Bastar is hilly and afforested and because of this it is distinct from the plains, it has never been so remote as not to be interconnected with them. What Bastar had was a distinct polity from the plains, though not necessarily in conflict with it. What Bastar did not have was the type of commercialization which existed in the plains.

The author has looked at two aspects of change in Bastar, the first relating to insertion of Bastar into a capitalist framework; and the second relating to the super-imposition of concepts of governance relevant to a non-tribal society into what is basically a tribal society. These are points of friction which have generated conflict and led to a series of resistances and rebellions in Bastar.

I find the references to the tribes and the semi-tribal groups which speak Halbi and have elements of castes in them both fascinating and informative. This makes the introductory chapter of the book of great importance in understanding the ethnography of the district. The chapter is superbly crafted. This is fully supported by the further studies she has made of the past history as gleaned by personal experience of life in Kukanar and collecting the oral history of the region. That such history is looked at from the point of view of an anthropologist makes part of the book more akin to a gazetteer than just history. The way in which the life style of the people is described reminds me of the *Gazetteer* of Balaghat written in 1901. When I toured my sub-division, Waraseoni, with that gazetteer in hand 58 years after it was written, I could still



identify the habits, work-styles and lifestyles of the various clans and castes which inhabit the rural areas of the district. In the course of just a few pages the author has been able to compress this information and present it most readably.

Though Bastar is remote it is also well endowed by nature and, therefore, has been a target for invasion. Naga Kings, Kakatiyas and then the last ruling dynasty of Bastar all came from outside and occupied the region. The Mughals, Marathas and Bahmani kingdoms all had influence in or suzerainty over Bastar. Despite this Bastar retained its basic tribal structure, largely because of the inaccessible nature of the terrain. At one level it forms part of the composite mosaic of India. At another level Bastar retains an indigenous identity of its own. The Bastar Dussehra has always been of great importance, but it is interesting to view it from Nandini Sundar's angle. She states, "Dussehra encapsulates the process of state formation under the Kakatiyas—both spatially and historically... Each ritual of the festival provides a glimpse of the textured construction of hegemony through time, e.g., the manner in which it is organized and orderly routine and imagery of imperial durbars was based on and refashioned old regime assemblies. . .". The author then goes on to state, "Secondly, Dussehra has always been and remains a performative act of legitimation, a process whereby to paraphrase Corrigan and Sayer, the state states—it defines individual and collective identity". In other words Dussehra in Bastar goes beyond mere Durga Puja—it is the means by which the ruler reminded his people about his own position, about their rights and their duties to the ruler. If Dussehra is today a religious festival, in the past it was a royal ritual. The description of Dussehra, its rituals and its importance form one of the key elements of the book.

This being a book review and not a precis of the book, one has to move from the purely social, cultural and anthropological to the main theme of the book, i.e., conflict in Bastar between the ruled and the rulers. The author begins with the movement which began in February, 1876, in which an exploited peasantry first petitioned and then tried to force the ruler to free them from the clutches of the Diwan, Gopinath Kapurdar and his Munshis. This resulted in perhaps the first British intervention in Bastar through the good offices of the Deputy Commissioner of Sironcha in C.P. & Berar. What this intervention stated was that Britain was the paramount power, whose officers could always be approached for settlement of legitimate grievances but who would also ensure that any armed demonstration or rebellion would be forcefully put down.

This much is history. What is interesting is the different interpretations of this rebellion referred to by the author. The Chief Commissioner of C.P. & Berar praised the people for a rebellion in which there was no bloodshed and in which the State Treasury had not been touched. The British supported the peasants against a weak and oppressive ruler. By implication, if the revolt had been against the British, then the peasants would no longer have been considered innocent and would have been punished by the British. Another interpretation of course is that the Diwan, who was alleged to have an illicit relationship with the Rani of Bastar, was unpopular and it is to eliminate him that the Raja and his advisors engineered the agitation. In any case the British emerged from this as protectors of the peasants, the Raja as being weak but misled by his corrupt officials, the tribals as being basically nonviolent and the Diwan and his Munshis being villains. This is Ramachandra Guha's interpretation, which is not accepted by Nandini Sundar. Whereas Ramachandra Guha feels that there was a relatively harmonious relationship between the Raja and the people, the author feels that this was the point at which the paternalism of the ruler gave way to a form of colonial paternalism of the British. It is from this point on that from time to time the British began to intervene in Bastar by appointing administrators.

Nandini Sundar's thesis is that about this time the revenue administration changed in Bastar. Malguzari was introduced, leading to a sharp rise in land

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revenue and exploitation of the cultivators. The author considers the period from 1876 to 1910 as a turning point in Bastar's history. There was greater British intervention, the forests were brought under direct management, 'jhum' cultivation was discouraged, though the beneficial 'toungiya' system was introduced, minor forest produce was largely taken away from the people, grazing rights were restricted and, gradually, the administration of forests brought in line with that of reserve forests in British India. As the administrative apparatus grew with the introduction of formal land survey and settlement, the practice of 'begar' also increased, which was much resented by the villagers.

By 1910 a combination of all the factors enumerated above led to a major rebellion, known as 'Bhumkal'. Starting from Netnar the rebellion soon spread to the Kanger Valley. Village 'haats' were looted and traders were attacked. Violence soon spread to acts of arson and looting of offices, schools and police stations and attacks on government officials. At Kuakonda and Bhairamgarh four policemen, a forester and a trader were killed. Government mail was intercepted and its distribution disturbed. The situation began to go out of hand and this led to direct intervention by the British, who sent in armed police to quell it. A detachment of the army was also sent to Bastar. The author gives the details of how the rebellion was put down, but within three months peace was restored and a number of rebels arrested. By May, 1910 the situation had normalized to the extent where almost the entire force was able to leave Bastar. By and large punishment was swift and took the form of public whipping. Lal Kalandar Singh of the ruling family, who had a major role to play in the rebellion, was deprived of his assets and exiled to British India. The author does not state this but what is interesting to me as a former administrator is that with less mobility and a small force the British were able to put down a widespread rebellion without too much loss of life on either sides. By contrast the police firing in Multai very recently, in which the mob fired upon had no weapons other than stones, resulted in 23 deaths and more than 50 gunshot injuries. To that extent one must admire the fact that the British probably handled mobs much better than we do.

Nandini Sundar contrasts the 1910 rebellion with that of 1876 and comes to the conclusion that both the elite and the peasants joined in 1910 because, unlike the previous rebellion, this one was directed against the British, whose policies had deprived even the elite of some of their privileges such as access to forests, 'muafis', etc. Like the peasants they, too, had grievances.

From 1920 onwards Bastar became a subject of study by anthropologists such as Verrier Elwin and administrator anthropologists such as Grigson, Hutton, Mills, Hyde and Mitchell. The anthropologically minded administrators wanted to isolate tribal groups from the corrosive influences of mainstream India, whereas other administrators wanted to extend normal administration to tribal areas. The nationalists who were fighting the British looked upon the policy of isolating the tribals as one directed to divide and rule. This led to clashes between the anthropologically minded administrators and the rest of the government. This became a conflict between indirect rule as suggested by the anthropologists and direct rule as desired by the government. This also took the form of decentralization of some aspects of administration, including the judicial administration, through village and paragana panchanyats. The idea was to save the people from excessive dependence on the police and the courts. Because the system was not carried to its logical conclusion of genuine decentralization, what resulted was a weak panchayat system and a normal administration which could use decentralization as an excuse for lack of accountability. Nevertheless, Bastar has remained relatively less disturbed in social and administrative customs than the neighbouring areas of Orissa and Bihar.

The author is of the view that the policies followed towards tribals in general and Bastar in particular have remained almost the same after independence as they were before independence, except that there is greater politicisation of the system. The conflict between Pravir Chandra Bhanj Deo, the last ruler of Bastar, and Government is chronicled in detail, the conflict being largely viewed in terms of electoral politics. What has been missed, however, Pravir Chandra Bhanj Deo, with whom I had some personal acquaintance, was mentally extremely imbalanced and almost a certifiable lunatic. I am not in any way justifying the handling of the situation which resulted in a number of adivasi deaths and that of Pravir Chandra Bhanj Deo, because that was an administrative failure. Nevertheless to hold that it is wrong to view the situation in Bastar at that stage as one of law and order and not due to internal political dynamics is to ignore the mischief done by a half crazy ruler playing on the emotions of tribals with a view to establishing his own hegemony. The author does comment that Pravir Chandra Bhanj Deo could not have fulfilled his promises of independence and prosperity and that a combination of government insensivity, political corruption and the megalomania of an individual ended in a tragic farce.

The history of rebellion ends with the story of Baba Bihari Das and the Bhagats. Dr. B.D. Sharma, then Collector of Bastar, emerges from this as the only hero. The fact is that initially Dr. B.D. Sharma supported the reform movement of Baba Bihari Das and then, when the movement became widespread and went out of hand, he tried to suppress it. The Baba then became important to the politics of Bastar and B.D. Sharma had to move. In the case of Baba Bihari Das I would submit that it is an example of how a so-called activist administrator, such as B.D. Sharma, can cause more harm than good by forgetting that an administrator never takes sides and that his first interest is orderly governance. Had B.D. Sharma behaved like an administrator, Baba Bihari Das would have been out of Bastar long before he could play mischief. In the ultimate analysis, whether the people be tribal or non-tribal, there is no substitute for good governance.

Any review is bound to be subjective because the reviewer's point of view may not coincide with that of the author. While differing with Nandini Sundar on some of her emphases and conclusions, I would nevertheless recommend her book as a bench-mark study and one which every scholar and administrator should read in order to understand tribal society.

Mahesh Buch, a former civil servant, is the Chair person, National Centre for Human Settlements & Environment, Bhopal.

Nandini Sundar contrasts the 1910 rebellion with that of 1876 and comes to the conclusion that both the elite and the peasants joined in 1910 because, unlike the previous rebellion, this one was directed against the British, whose policies had deprived even the elite of some of their privileges such as access to forests, 'muafis', etc. Like the peasants they, too, had grievances.

MANOHAR
NEW BOOKS

CASTE IN INDIA
Origin, Function and Dimensions of Change
Suvira Jaiswal
81-7304-238-1, 1998, 290p. Demy 8vo, Rs. 500

This comprehensive study is divided into five chapters. The introduction looks at the definition of caste, the evidence in Vedic texts, and the class role of caste and the elite. This is followed by a detailed chapter on the historiography of caste and gender issues. Other chapters examine stratification in Rigvedic society and early Buddhism. It concludes with an overview of the changing paradigms of brahmanical integration.

REPRESENTING THE OTHER?
Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims
(Eighth to Fourteenth Century)
Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya
81-7304-252-7, 1998, 130p. Demy 8vo, Rs. 250

The history of how 'others' were perceived and represented in the past in India has hardly been consciously worked upon by historians so far.

This monograph examines literary and epigraphic texts which share some similarities in order to find out how satisfactorily they convey to us the general attitudes to groups of new comers to Indian society in various capacities during the period under study.

The study is organized into four chapters: The Twin Burden. Historiography and Sources: Images of Raiders and Rulers. Meritorious Deeds, Sacred Sites and the Image of God as the Lord of the universe: and conclusions.

Two appendics and select bibilography further enrich the study.

INDIA
Changing Economic Structure in the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries
Outline History of Crafts and Trade
Alexander I. Tchitcherov
81-7304-206-3, 1998, 326p. Demy 8vo, Rs. 550

Based on a vast array of sources, the author describes how in a feudal system, on the eve of the colonial period, the output of various products was transformed from household village crafts to production for various markets.

The author also examines patterns of trade, rural and urban markets, merchant-state nexus, increasing engagement of the feudal class in trade and finally the new forms and volume of trade and commodity production with the arrival of European merchants.

ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND CIRCULATION OF FOREIGN COINS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
Osmund Bopearachchi and
D.P.M. Weerakkody (eds)
81-7304-216-0, 1998, 292p. illus. Demy 4to, Rs. 900

Papers in this collection are rich in content and diversity, and cover a wide range of field from the origin of Chinese and Greek coins to modern Bank notes, Islamic coins and coins for presentation and display in early modern Europe and Roman, Chinese, Indian and Islamic coins circulating in Sri lanka and several other countries of the Indian Ocean. Of special interest are the papers on the early European coins and paper money minted/printed in Europe for circulation in Sri Lanka.

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Roadmap to Economic Destiny

Ralph Buultjens

THE WEALTH AND POVERTY OF NATIONS

By David Landes

W.W. Norton and Company, New York, pp. 597, $ 30.00

THE COMMANDING HEIGHTS—THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE MARKETPLACE THAT IS REMAKING THE WORLD

By Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw

Simon and Schuster, New York, pp. 457, $ 26.00

Right now, the world of twentieth century economics is dying. Its central lineaments, powerful features which defined an age, are decreasingly influential or increasingly irrelevant to the course of geoeconomics. As the old stumbles, the shape of things to come casts its shadow. The outline is clear: A fresh economic civilization is in the making, a civilization conceptually and structurally gathering around the organizing principle of globalized capital and markets. However, these confluences of idea and system do not embrace a convergence of soul. The emerging environment is deeply riven by the frustrations of the leftouts and the dropouts—angers enhanced because there are no more socialistic handouts in the brave new capitalist world.

The passage between these two realms of economics, one departing and the other coming, is proving more treacherous than ever anticipated. Developments that contradict experience and subvert conventional wisdom abound—intractable unemployment in traditionally prosperous western Europe, prolonged stagnation in once dynamic Japan, collapse of the "miracle" in southeast and east Asia, the dark underside of the market in Russia, failures of development economics in both poor regions like Africa and societies awash with oil money, and other unpredictables. Happenings that amaze the affluent and enrage the afflicted. In fact, so lopsided is the condition of this traditional global economy that only a few countries with about 30 per cent of the world's output are operating near full blast. In effect, they carry the balance 70 per cent who are currently non-performers! A negative tilt in this precarious balance can plunge all of us into the abyss.

It's not supposed to work like this—and there are no modern precedents or guidelines to help us find our place or ease our path. The best we can do is to look at the past and examine the present to see what all this means. In short, we need to ask two sets of questions. First, the historical and contextual: How did we come to this situation? What does the past tell and foretell? Second, a contemporary analysis: What is going on? In what direction is the global economy moving? If the answers are good enough, we can perhaps garner insights which will facilitate our understanding and help policy-making.

These concerns are addressed separately in two complementary books of about the same length. David Landes, former Coolidge Professor of History at Harvard University, takes the long view—looking back to look around. Daniel Yergin, author of *The Prize* (the Pulitzer Prize-winning saga of the petroleum industry) and head of Cambridge Energy Research, collaborates with his colleague Joseph Stanislaw in an exploration of the recent upheavals in the global market place—looking around to look forward. Using different approaches and drawing on different strengths, these seasoned professionals have produced, quite unwittingly, works that sit well together.

I

In *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, a deliberate take-off on Adam Smith's title, Landes argues that the greatest problem in the world today is the gap between rich and poor. This condition presents a horrible threat: If deprived peoples do not become wealthier "they will seek to take what they cannot make and if they cannot earn by exporting commodities, they will export people....wealth is an irresistible magnet and poverty is a potentially raging contaminant; it cannot be segregated." Peace and well-being in affluent nations corresponds largely to progress in others.

At the heat of all this is a single issue: why has the West become so rich and some regions dropped so far behind? Economic history, says Landes, can illumine the answer and tell us if the catch-up process can be accelerated. It should also provide awareness of the cultural adaptations and political commitments required for this—awareness, of course, being no guarantor of consequential happenings. In short, this is the Landes line: Know your history and you will know many things!

Landes delivers history on a panoramic scale. The superhighway of his book is the sustained advance of Europe—a millennium during which there was a virtual economic takeover of our planet by the Atlantic tip of Eurasia. Extending in time from the central Middle ages to the Victorian Era, this thrust was achieved in five escalating and interlinked stages—technical innovation, exploration, imperial consolidation, the Industrial Revolution and modernization. At various moments, various nations led the march—Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, Britain—but it was always a European show. Along the way, these small, ill-formed countries overtook and often took over larger, more cohesive and culturally superior civilizations such as China, the Islamic empires and India.

Why this ascent? Landes proposes several reasons (geography, fragmentation of political power, systematized scientific investigation, proliferation of printing machines, etc.), but he assigns primacy to two: a relatively competitive market and a notion of individual property rights, both much less restrictive than in non-European states. But high tides do not last forever. The twentieth century brought a recessional. Mighty European powers were shoved aside by the downdraft of events and the vitality of contenders—wars, decolonizations, strategic miscalculations, complacency, entrepreneurial constipation (as Landes colourfully calls it), and the champions of our time (America, Germany, Japan and, for a while, the Asian shooting-stars). Landes: "When one's country becomes smaller, one's self becomes smaller."

The organization of *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* consciously and unblushingly reflects its eurocentricism. An initial one-third of the text focuses on the roots of European growth. Among other credits, it attributes the very concept of economic development to Europe. The next one-fifth or so defines the Industrial revolution and explains why it began in Britain around 1770. This disquisition elaborates on the three pre-conditions (culture, money, knowledge) which made the transformation possible and then describes its spread to the Continent. Imperial expansion and non-European societies, a series of regional and civilizational case studies, absorb a further quarter of the manuscript. The concluding 20 per cent deals with Europe's loss of leadership, winners and losers, and where we are at present.

At first glance, this Euroweight seems excessive —a kind of flag-waving. However, Landes does make the point that his work is not a multicultural analysis nor a moral evaluation. His self-set markers limit this study to the evolution and impact of western civilization during the past ten centuries—the Age of Progress in which its influence has been commanding. Circumscribed by these boundaries, the treatment of external cultures in obviously a lesser priority, but where undertaken it

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is generally knowledgeable and honest.

II

What you get from Landes depends on how you read him. Casual perusers will find this a charming book, full of lively vignettes and anecdotes. It bubbles with capsules of impressive erudition which produce lots of disconnected insights relevant to current events—linkages not frequently made by the author. Here is a light sampling: History dooms Russia developmentally; from the Crimean to the Cold War, conflict always brings promising reform and reform brings nothing but misery. China, whose efforts at modernization have consistently been thwarted by palace intrigue, has traditionally sacrificed trade to political imperatives. The best clue to a nation's growth and prospects is the status and role of women. The most successful cures for poverty come from within—the meager value and high price of foreign assistance evokes an old African aphorism: "The hand that receives is always under the one that gives!" and so on. . .

In this vein, Landes has attractive ruminations on topography, climate and associated technologies. Geography, he declares, is not destiny but it is nonetheless a fateful influence. All the rich countries are located in the temperate zone while poverty invariably inhabits the tropics and semi-tropics. Despite its discomforts, winter is the great friend of humanity: silent killer of parasites, pests and disease-bearing insects. Refrigeration made spices unnecessary as food preservatives and destroyed a trade which provoked Europe's global outreach. Air-conditioning has forever transformed localities where heat and humidity once precluded prosperity—it is the principal agent in the revival of cities such as New Orleans, Houston and Singapore!

All this is well and good for those who like their history in engaging soundbites. More serious readers will be distressed by elements that reduce a potentially outstanding exposition to a meandering and self-indulgent recapitulation. Given the well-worn path he treads, Landes cannot be expected to say anything conceptually very new. And he does not—*The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* contains little original scholarship of significance. There is no demerit in this. What disturbs is that Landes misses an opportunity to cohesively present a story vital to the public interest at this time. Within the confines of this volume is a luminous book, unfortunately obscured by the absence of clear-cut intellectual architecture.

Much of the fault lies in the tumbling nature of Landes' narrative. Although written with unusual elegance and wit, it is excessively discursive. Many supporting anecdotes divert rather than focus attention. Among the overload of distractions are more than one thousand foot-and end-notes (some quite long) and sixty-six pages of bibliography. Often, the book is exhaustingly repetitive and tedious. Should we be told twice about the life of the British chemist Perkin or the condition of Algeria? Is it mandatory to describe almost every invention that contributed to the Industrial Revolution in Britain? Do Landes' particular dislikes—political correctness and radical theory—need to be assaulted over and over again? Could not the jarring overuse of the world 'brittle" be reduced? On this showing, Landes' editor has certainly not earned his keep!

Beyond these concerns is a major problem of concluding perspective. In the end, after a thousand years and hundreds of pages, Landes' findings are thin and he has little to say about the future. The cop-out: "I do not want to advocate any particular national policy...." so, he winds up by essentially restating his opening proposition that the past leads to a growing and troubling rift between rich and poor today. Surely, this is inadequate. But the author's counsel is simple: keep trying. In his world, the optimists have it because they are affirmative: "even when wrong, they are positive, and that is the way of achievement..." This Dale Carnegie imperative, the very medicine Landes recommends, is what has partly led us to the present pass. If hope alone can fuel economic development, Schweitzer's Lambarene and Mother Teresa's Calcutta should be like Rodeo Drive!

III

While Landes' efforts do not give full expression to his undoubted scholarship and experience, they do stimulate some disquieting reflection. Take, for instance, the instructive value of European journey. The Europeans did inherit the earth for a long while. They were then an unworthy people—greedy, bloody, duplicitous; brave but savagely scornful of other cultures and faiths, not especially true to the higher forms of their own. Their advancement seems to have had little to do with moral character—it may even be due to lack of ennobling qualities. Indeed, as their public ethics have improved, and they have in recent days, material success has declined. Does this book bear muted confirmation that success and character are not conjoined? If so, what are the inducements and rewards for improving civic morality and humanity?

A second conundrum. Western civilization has, in recent decades, become universalized. In particular, its economic and entrepreneurial attributes have found ready resonance in certain non-western groups. Does this suggest that the true vectors of western civilization are now modernized Indians, east Asians and Middle Easterners? Are detested migrants merely asserting their cultural citizenship—a new notion of belonging and nationality liberated from geography? Is caucasoid Europe finished, never to rise again? Or can the Union be a plinth from which Europe will once more wrest global leadership, this time from its own offspring?

Landes' book is about progress and economic development but it also serves an ancillary purpose—recording the spread of capitalism. This, after all, has been Europe's most fruitful export, its seed taking root so vigorously that it almost monopolizes the world of economics. We know that political, economic and social monopolies do not function very well. What we still do not know is whether the present kind of big-screen monopoly—planetary in dimension—will work differently. Are its internal impulses sufficiently competitive to sustain dynamism or will the excesses inherent in monopoli conspire to bring it down? This volu reminds us that Europe has had ma systems (feudalism, monarchy, fascis communism) whose regional or tra continental monopoly appeared pe manent, only soon to evanesce. Co temporary capitalism should harken this lesson.

IV

The Commanding Heights is about t struggle through which this curre dominance of capitalism has emerge Its thesis is uncomplicated: The twen eth century is a battlefield on whi two vision of economics have co tended—a state-led ideology and market-driven approach. During t initial seventy years or so, political co ditions favoured and thus induce unprecedented government interve tions in economics. In the past two d cades, the tide has been decisively r versed—a dramatic contraction of sta influence and an expansion of mark mechanisms. This capitalist upsur has occurred everywhere; its symbo and catalysts are privatization, deco trol, divestiture of state manageme administrative downsizing, tax cuts a the globalization of finance via tel communications. Yergin-Stanisla "the world over, governments ha come to plan less, to own less and regulate less... the decamping of t state from the commanding heights economics) marks a great divide b tween the twentieth and twenty-fir centuries."

What is striking about Yergin-Stanislaw's writing is not the novelt of their theme—hardly a secret to ob servers of international affairs—but th way it is laid out. We are taken o whirlwind tours through every conti nent. All over there is evidence that th marketplace has pushed and is push ing governments out of the economic sphere. This is documented extensively with dozens of countries examined t show how the state got into th economy, how things went bad an how it is now getting out. Almost ninet godfathers of private enterprise are in terviewed, mostly theorists and policy wonks. There are too many has-been here—too many views more nostalgi than penetrating. A few more practitio ners (businessmen, entrepreneurs managers, investors, traders and oth ers who make the market work) woul add a feel for the cutting-edge. Yet, i its own way, this imbalance mirrors peculiarity of the present era of reform The return of the market has bee sponsored by an unexpected coterie o government officials, technocrats an bureaucrats, policy-planners and po litical figures—those who normall

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The Yergin-Stanislaw book is first-class reporting with all the strengths and few failings of the species. It is a splendid survey of what's happening, the quick and dirty on how the market came to defeat state intervention. True, Commanding Heights *does leave readers a bit breathless, and its statistics will fast be left behind, but it is essential reading for anyone concerned with economics and the world at large.*

would be expected to back state intervention.

For a book suffused with detail and data remarkably few errors, at least to my reckoning, slip through the dragnet of accuracy. Inevitably some do (e.g., India's Ambassador car is modelled on the old Morris Oxford and not on the British Austin; former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was rather ill-used by Rajiv Gandhi *not* by mother Indira as claimed). It is, then, all the more surprising that the authors' starting point is not quite on target. The "birth of privatization" and the first anti-state roll-back of significance was *not* by Margaret Thatcher (hers was the first in a *major* economy). It took place in Sri Lanka with the arrival of the Jayewardene Government in 1977, a few years before Thatcher began her flailings. This then attracted wide attention, partly because Sri Lanka had been in the vanguard of Third World socialism, partly because of loud International Monetary Fund/World Bank applause, largely because President Jayawardene's quixotic comments—"Let the robber barons come"—titillated the media. If minnows get mention—and they do (New Zealand, Bolivia, Ghana, etc.)—Sri Lanka deserves its mite.

These, however, are small carpings. The Yergin-Stanislaw book is first-class reporting with all the strengths and few failings of the species. It is a splendid survey of what's happening, the quick and dirty on how the market came to defeat state intervention. True, *Commanding Heights* does leave readers a bit breathless, and its statistics will fast be left behind, but it is essential reading for anyone concerned with economics and the world at large.

On the downside, the abundance of interviews and quotations from notables is excessive. Numerous profiles of the great and near-great needlessly clog already loaded intellectual pipelines. And do we really want to know that Nehru was nicknamed Joe at Harrow School, that Nkrumah's early education was by Catholic missionaries, or that the young Jacques Delors established his own film club? Colour and spice are nice but this book is not enriched by such piddling tattle.

For all its appreciation of market forces, *Commanding Heights* is no ideological tract. Yergin-Stanislaw are not afraid to ask uncomfortable and presently unanswerable questions: Is the current pro-market mood a swing of the pendulum or something irreversible; what if the market cannot deliver widespread prosperity, employment or fairness; can it find a moral appeal in any way comparable to socialism; will a system lodged in self-interest and profits nurture an intolerable amount of greed and abuse of private power? Then, there is this prescient passage:

> Of all the dangers [of the dominance of the market], perhaps the greatest threat... would arise from massive disruption of the international financial system... In the past, financial panics took weeks or even months to unfold. Now contagion can sweep through the world's markets in hours, endangering the entire edifice... The danger arises not from the possibility of a shock but rather from the convergence of several shocks at one time.

Clearly the authors' sense that the mastery of the market is more vulnerable than its cheerleaders allow, its ascent as yet tentative and unconfirmed. They know, and fear, that any crack in this fragile carapace will bring back the ethic of state intervention. What other alternative, if things go wrong?

V

In their anxiety to construct the broadest possible picture Yergin-Stanislaw overlook some chinks. Take communism, which they evaluate as a long and formidable adversary of capitalism. This view, shared by so many, is myopic. Look further and the perspective is startlingly changed: Instead of being capitalism's enemy, communism proves to be the seed bed of the private enterprise system. Every communist country has, within a few decades, become ardently capitalist or is on the way to becoming so. Marx and Lenin got it wrong when they saw capitalism as the stepping-stone to communism. It seems just the reverse way around.

Another item for the Believe It or Not column—the irony that capitalism, historically castigated as the exploiter of the toiling masses, has come to be regarded as the pathway to economic salvation of the poor. Its institutional persona, the multinational corporation, now finds welcome signs where once it was the Great Satan. In some areas, notably on the South China coast and in segments of Southeast and East Asia, capitalism is indeed the vehicle of a better life to the impoverished. Jeffrey Sachs of the Harvard Institute for International Development: "Global capitalism is surely the most promising institutional arrangement for worldwide prosperity that history has ever seen." The current crisis in Asia tests this proposition. Nonetheless, the notion remains as a fascinating reminder of how images are recast.

Here is more paradox. Capitalism without bankruptcy is like Christianity without hell; it is perdition which frightens the sin out of the system. But religious punishments are probably more condign—they are visited directly on the miscreants themselves. The wages of financial sin are inflicted on those who have no responsibility for its commission—investors, the public and even countries. The larger the iniquity, the larger the impact on others. Relief is essential and bailouts have to be engineered to lessen communal agony. This relief too frequently assuages the malefactors. Question: How can sinners be disciplined or reformed if there is no penalty for misdeeds?

Regular emergency rescues create a slipstream of fateful consequences. Control of the bailout, life or death for governments and countries, has begot the largest collective transfer of power in the twentieth century—the surrender of policy by governments to the International Monetary Fund. Today, the IMF is virtual economic hegemon and arbiter of public policy in more than one-half of the nations in the world. Massive shifts of power in the past were diffusions—collapse of the old emperors after World War I or the handing over of colonial territories to native peoples after World War II. They were born from the womb of terrible conflict and general mayhem. Now, on a scale unprecedented in our time, there is an effortless in-gathering of authority; authority reinforced with dreadful punitive capacities. It is a process difficult to resist—nations in dire economic trouble, often self-inflicted, need a life saver and the IMF is the only one capable of performing this invaluable service.

It will be interesting to know whether Yergin-Stanislaw, so busy on the commanding heights, recognize this as a critical issue. Are the IMF and its affiliates beneficial, menacing or rivals to markets and governments? Will the marketplace eventually be subordinated to IMF compulsions? Properly organized markets and governments are accountable and the wielders of power within these bailwicks can be ousted by elections or revolutions. Only retirement or death removes the Lords of the IMF, the rulers of the least transparent empire on earth—and this kind of tenure gives special immunities and advantages to those who hold it.

A final word—people matter. In another context, Landes says it well: "The weakness of autocracy is in the human raw material." The inference is pertinent to the order that Yergin-Stanislaw foresee. This marketplace civilization will only prevail if it does more than merely secure the triumph of the capitalist system. It will have to undertake creative ventures, prove that social tasks can be efficiently handled by private enterprise, build a moral case for the preferment of business, show that it is superior to state organisms in the services it provides, demonstrate that it can resist the corruptions by which bureaucracies have forfeited public confidence. Execution of this agenda demands a distinctive breed of entrepreneur-manager. So, if Landes' world of coming clashes is to be avoided and Yergin-Stanislaw's world of the marketplace is to be sustained, they and we had better think about the quality of men and women who can do the job.

Both Landes and Yergin-Stainslaw agree that the end of the twentieth century is a pivotal moment. Their prescriptions are not very far apart—faith and hope in the future, faith and hope in the marketplace. Yet, this will take us only part of the way. To reach further, we will need much more wisdom—an understanding which also conflates and incorporates Landes' historical comprehension with Yergin-Stanislaw's analytical precision. This ideal roadmap to economic destiny has not yet arrived. Until then, we can well make do with books like these.

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In Quest Of New Perspectives

Sumi Krishna

POPULATION, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Edited by R.K. Pachauri and Lubina F. Qureshy

Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), New Delhi, 1997, pp. 357, price not stated.

ENVIRONMENTALISM: POLITICS, ECOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

By Pravin Sheth

Rawat Publications, 1997, pp. 338, Rs. 500.00

Indian scholarship has for long been characterized by a disinclination to cross the narrowly-defined boundaries of traditional "subjects". With a few exceptions, Indian universities have responded sluggishly to the global trend of inter-disciplinary studies. So, although expertise and analytical rigour within these established "subjects" is often impressive, there has been considerable difficulty in shifting the academic focus to new questions and areas of concern (environmental or gender studies, for example) which require multi-disciplinary approaches and analyses. However, in recent years, this task has been taken over by some research institutions and non-government organisations (NGOs), and also by a few individual scholars. Both the books under review here—like many others now being published—are a reflection of the attempt to traverse disciplines in quest of fresh perspectives.

The historical roots of the population debate lie in Malthusian concerns about the rate of growth of food production vis-à-vis the rate of increase in the size of populations. The apprehension, sometimes unspoken and sometimes explicit, has been that increasing numbers of poor people would undermine economic development, leading to political conflicts.

One quick method of building bridges between different areas of concern, and between theory and praxis, is to get a cross-section of professionals together to discuss a common theme. This is the method adopted by the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), New Delhi to examine the complex interlinkages between population, environment and development. Another method is adopted by political scientist Pravin Sheth of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth to unravel the politics of ecology and development by bringing his specialist knowledge to bear on other disciplinary areas. This requires gaining an understanding of these other subjects, a more ambitious and difficult task.

The TERI publication consists of the carefully edited and referenced papers presented at a conference on population, environment and development, organized by the Tata Energy and Resources Institute—North America (TERI–NA) in Washington, D.C., in 1996. Given their very varied specializations and backgrounds, the contributors from the U.S., India and other nations, inevitably produce papers that are extremely diverse both in content and scale. As most contributors tend to stay within their own areas of expertise and experience, and the volume does not provide any record of the interventions or discussions, the difficult task of synthesis is then left to the editors. Their problem is apparent in the hodge-podge sequence of the papers themselves—speculations on how many people the world can support; biodiversity conservation in the Philippines; transmigration in Lampung, Indonesia; water problems in the Middle East; a review of poverty and economic growth in India over two decades; an analysis of census data in Kota district (Rajasthan) India; energy development in China; the spiritual and cultural case against the Tehri Dam project in Uttarkashi, India; conflicts arising from population and environmental stress; global warming; and the environmental case for vegetarianism.

Professor Sheth's book, on the other hand, is somewhat more organized in the sequence of chapters, moving from India's cultural traditions, and general environmental problems through a discussion of environment and society, laws, policies and institutional structures, and the "ecodynamics of system operation". This is followed by a review of environmental rights and activism, and a consideration of democratic and sustainable models of development. However, despite the apparent order, the book tends to be an assortment of different views that do not cohere. Swings in style from chapter to chapter, awkward language, poor editing, very careless referencing—even blithely paraphrasing and quoting from other authors without acknowledgement—detracts from the intellectual commitment with which one presumes scholars conduct their research.

Both books under review are concerned with "sustainable development". The editors of the TERI volume see the economy as a sub-system of a larger ecosystem, and some of the contributors have attempted to address the dynamics of larger ecosystems. Sheth too veers to the view that ecology forms the basis of development, but his book treats ecology in a most cursory manner. It is also interesting that although both TERI and Sheth are concerned about the linkages between environment/ecology and development, the focus that each adopts seems to totally exclude that of the other. So, while population is the point of convergence for the TERI book, and it advocates a "global perspective" (Maurice Strong in his Foreword), the international political systems within which population policies and programmes are formulated are neglected. Sheth puts political systems at the core, but he ignores the population question altogether.

As is well known, the historical roots of the population debate lie in Malthusian concerns about the rate of growth of food production vis-à-vis the rate of increase in the size of populations. The apprehension, sometimes unspoken and sometimes explicit, has been that increasing numbers of *poor people* would undermine economic development, leading to political conflicts. Responses have varied from coercive means of controlling fertility directly to the more moderate developmental path of improving women's health and education as an indirect means of reducing births. In recent decades, the parameters of the old population debate, once the preserve of demographers and development economists, have been altered by the newer environmental and gender perspectives. Natural resource managers have extended the debate to include (besides food) a whole gamut of resources: biomass, water, energy etc. The environmental movement has furthered the argument that the demographic equation is governed not just by numbers of people vis-à-vis resources, but also by levels of consumption. Many environmentalists have also related the patterns of consumption to the political question of distributive justice, and to the nature of national and global political economies. Approaching the question from another angle, the women's movement has sharpened the population debate by challenging the patriarchal mode of conventional theories of socio-economic change. It has questioned the legitimacy of most methods of controlling women's fertility, and some sections have emphasized women's strategic need for autonomy of choice and control over their own lives. Though control of contraception may not be the critical issue in the population-envi-

The political questions of rights and distributive justice, and the politicisation of institutional structures are central to Pravin Sheth's book, and he deals with this in some detail. But the trouble with this study is that the attempt to link the political domain to ecology-development (subject areas with which he is much less acquainted) is conceptually confused and often contradictory.

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Being more concerned with the contemporary scene and policies for the future, the TERI book does not go into the genesis of the population debate, but its broad thrust supports a moderate path of economic development, as a means to population stabilization. It moves beyond the concerns of the old population debate and "the natural resource concerns of environmentalists, like water, cropland and fisheries.

ronment debate, it has been argued that such control could be liberating for women, a factor in their empowerment.

Being more concerned with the contemporary scene and policies for the future, the TERI book does not go into the genesis of the population debate, but its broad thrust supports a moderate path of economic development, as a means to population stabilization. It moves beyond the concerns of the old population debate and "the natural resource concerns of environmentalists, like water, cropland and fisheries (Robert Engelman). Moreover, the book distinguishes between the environmental effects of commercial consumption and those of subsistence (Paris Reidhead, Lubina Qureshy and Vishal Narain). However, it stops short of dealing with the political structures of inequity and power relations in society, both within nations and between them. And it pays scant attention to the political questions of gender.

The most comprehensive and lucid paper is that by Robert Repetto of World Resources Institute (WRI), Washington. Over two decades ago, the Ford Foundation's *Second India Study* had looked at the prospects of a doubling of India's population (a "second India") and envisaged possible scenarios for the year 2000. With that doubling in sight, the World Resources Institute (WRI), Washington, and a group of Indian experts have now reassessed the earlier study. Repetto says the reassessment showed that while there was value in looking ahead at the implications of massive population growth, there was need for humility in making predictions. The study anticipated many problems that have not materialized. For instance, energy requirements have been greatly reduced by the unforeseen conversion of the steel industry from open hearth to electric arc furnaces, and the cement industry from wet to dry processes. So too, the policy shift away from heavy industry as a development strategy has reduced the environmental impacts and capital requirements of growth (p. 156). Tracing the interactions of population growth, economic development and environmental stress over 20 years, Repetto says what has "emerged most strongly over the 20 years since the *Second India Study* is the importance of social and cultural determinants in the demographic transition—especially the place of women in society" (p. 159). Looking back, Repetto points out that neither technology nor resources have been intractable problems, but development has faltered over institutional and policy-related stumbling blocks. The key issue in this view is that of "creating mechanisms, whether through market incentives, community organisations or other means of governance to bring the interests of individuals in line with those of the community" (p. 173).

By locating the problem essentially as one of the individual versus the community, and the solution as better governance, Repetto's approach overlooks the conflict of interests between classes and communities within the nation, and the pressures of international interests. Indeed, in the TERI book, the only contributor who alludes to the international political economy is politician Emil Salim, formerly Indonesia's Minister for Environment and Population.

The political questions of rights and distributive justice, and the politicisation of institutional structures are central to Pravin Sheth's book, and he deals with this in some detail. But the trouble with this study is that the attempt to link the political domain to ecology-development (subject areas with which he is much less acquainted) is conceptually confused and often contradictory.

Endorsing Vandana Shiva's romanticised vision of Mother Earth and of Indian civilization as having arisen from the forests, Sheth says, "the lotus is another dominant symbol of the ethics and bliss of ecology" (sic. p. 25). In his view, "Nature is the expression of energy which is the feminine expression of creative principle of the cosmos" (sic. p. 86). He takes quite literally Tagore's emotional image of the struggle against colonialism as the breaking of a dam to let the river waters flow to the people downstream to support the environmental case against dams. And yet, when it comes to the Narmada dam project, in his native Gujarat, he feels it is now "environmentally benign" (p. 100), reaching "ever higher level (sic.) of performance" (p. 148), a "development project with a clean break with the past experience" (p. 250). Sheth's argument that the voice of the water-starved poor of Gujarat needs to be heard, that anti-dam activists have resorted to exaggeration and misinformation in the press, and that environmentalists are often negative and obstructive are perhaps valid, but what are we to make of his own doublespeak: development for the Narmada valley, but not in other areas?

Sheth is quite right in pointing out that the politics of environment has not been adequately explored, but his own attempt to do so is disappointing. Perhaps, this is just because his use of the English language is so convoluted—a good editor may have helped. But there is also a deeper conceptual problem. On the one hand, he seems to empathize with a *people's politics* (although questions of gender are almost wholly excluded), and with the radical transformation of society by non-party, non-governmental political activity. On the other hand, he cannot bring himself to endorse environmental NGOs whose record is uneven, and whom he also distrusts because of their anti-Narmada dam stance. Sheth's dilemma is not uncommon. The trouble is that he does not seem to recognize this.

Both the books under review seek to take forward the debate on environment/ecology and development, although each has a different focus of concern: population in the TERI volume, politics in Sheth's study. Each has adopted a different formula to gain an inter-disciplinary perspective on the issues. Such endeavours are welcome, although the outcome is not satisfactory in either case. I think the lack of conceptual clarity in the hodge-podge contents of the TERI book and the uncertain perspective of Sheth's book arises at least partly from the methodological problem of traversing inter-disciplinary boundaries. The intellectual effort required to analyze and understand complex interlinkages cannot be overcome by short-cut methods.

Sumi Krishna, an independent scholar on environment-development and gender, is the author of Environmental Politics, People's Lives and Development Choices.

A Ship Drowning

A ship drowning,
calling out for help
in a lashing sea,

I tossed in this ocean of births
when the lord
in his splendor,
bearing wheel and conch,
called out to me: "O, O, you there!"

showed me his grace,
and became one with me.

Tamil to English by A.K. Ramanujan
From "Hymns for The Drowning"

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The Secular as a Public Theatre

Shiv Vishvanathan

IN THE NAME OF THE SECULAR: CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL ACTIVISM IN INDIA

By Rustom Bharucha

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 198, Rs. 395.00

I like secularism. It is secularists I don't like. They take my poetic world and turn it into dull prose. What should be celebrated in citizenly ease and even silence, they recite like catechism. What should be lived out quietly, they hallelujah like born-again converts. I love the Nehruvian years and the constitution but when secularists approach them they do so hysterically. Secularism for them is not a dwelling, a being-in-the world. Just like the VHP and the BJP is irritated with Hinduism, secularists don't feel easy with the secular. They don't see that secularism, like Hinduism, is a way of life.

The problem of secularism gets aggravated by a sense of crisis. There is panic that the Nehruvian world has faded and there is an impending sense of the BJP entering every crevice. Secularists behave like geocentric scientists building elaborate epicycles to their world. It is a world in crisis, full of Stakhonovites working overtime, reworking every phrase, every word, every sentence. There is a hysteria which mirrors the world of Rithambara. But there are two problems more specific to academic secularism.

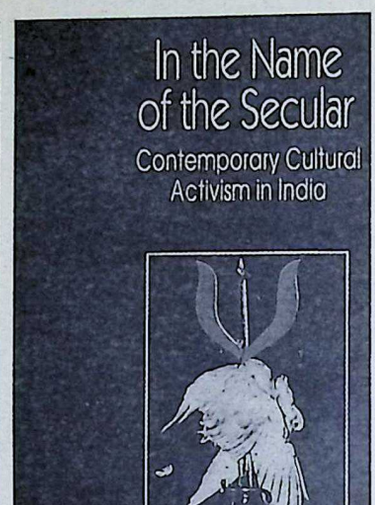
There are many incidental but valuable spin-offs to the book. When secularism is the last straw of the Left, it starts rereading its relation to the state. It learns to be less lethal about slight differences in perspective and therefore becomes less fratricidal. In fact it may look more openly at the religious roots of creativity instead of instrumentally and mechanically utilizing the Bhakti movement. In fact all this seems a part of Bharucha's search.

Firstly, it uses woodenly the tools of discourse analysis. Such a frame becomes a disciplinary matrix, a behavioural corset. Secularism becomes a dull grammar without an ordinary language. There is no trace of poetry, myth, even jokes, which allow for a play of language, for alchemy, ambiguity and metamorphosis. You can't improvise like a jazz musician with the music of current day secularism. In fact, if you scratch a secularist you see the mentality of a Victorian governess. Worse, the writings of many of them have been a losing battle with the manifestoes of Ashis Nandy. They fire blunderbusses at the latter when a laugh will do.

Secondly academic secularism has all the mentality of the club. Secularism becomes not only politically correct but also incestuous. The same ten people are referred to leading to an inane repetition of the twenty sacred terms for secularism instead of a thousand names for God. The members also employ these terms as semaphores of recognition. In fact, at seminars, you can see 'official' secularists smile smugly when key words are displayed like flashcards. It is the QED look. It is life in a Masonic lodge and mixing with them you feel you have read the wrong books or gone to the wrong schools.

I keep wondering how secularism is going to escape its ideologues and breathe again without the corsets of a dull discourse analysis. I want a secularism that roams the streets and yet is easy about the academe, a secularism that does not get caught in the idiot official oppositions of science and religion, which sees identity as a hummock of selves rather than a monocultural aloneness or emptiness. A secularism alive to its own tensions and constantly inventive.

I am stating all this because the secular is a sticky minefield where it is difficult to criticize without being immediately dubbed fundamentalist or communal. So with these caveats, let me move on to *In the Name of the Secular*. The title smacks of old testament prophecy but fortunately the book turns



out to be tentative, honest, clear, an open work. You can sip your tea and disagree happily with the author.

Rustom Bharucha calls himself a cultural worker. One blanches at the term. The associations are terrible. It reminds one of sexual workers and scientific workers but may be not as bad as the second. Bharucha's work swings in my mind's eye like a pendulum. His book on theatre was competent. His tract on the danseuse Chandralekha was embarrassing hagiography, all icon and little sense of the person, like a Kathakali mask without the dance of eyes behind it. His *In Search of the Sacred* was a moving pamphlet, but his *In The Name of The Secular* convinces me that secularism is a tiresome and tiring business and that Bharucha wants a way out of it.

Bharucha opens in an easy way. He realizes that the Nehruvian world is no longer adequate as a framework for the secular. One has to find out why and then invent one's way out of trouble. Secularism is no longer a Nehruvian nostalgia. He also claims that secularism will no longer be equated with anti-communalism and rightly warns that "it is the surest way for dissent to be determined by communal categories." Here, one realizes, is a man who wants to be inventive. This, in particular, is heartening for secularism so far as it has been a problem of consumption, of diffusion like an immunization project. One is expected to swallow huge doses of ideological pap. But Bharucha is easy and even dismisses the likes of Badal Sircar as tired and empty and opens his lenses to scrutinize *Sahmat*.

Sahmat has its origins in the life and death of Safdar Hashmi, a brilliant and courageous man who died fighting Congress goons. *Sahmat* was formed as a mode of protest against such brut ity. But what began as an attempt memorialize an act of courage has b come a club. Bharucha realizes that the is something self-defeating about the salons of the secular. He criticizes t umbilical relation between *Sahmat* a the state, or one fragment of it call Arjun Singh. (Pity it gives him a cle chit on the Bhopal disaster). He wa that *Sahmat*, despite its courageous i tervention in and at Ayodhya, mig become affable. Bharucha whets on appetite for an internal critique a then stops. I wish he had analyzed ho Left historians ran in panic to the pat archal state during the controversy ov the rewriting of history books. I wi he had also referred to the way Nur Hassan and his nepotistic—secular nepotistic—ilk ran the Ministry Education because then one can al talk about BJP infiltration of admini trative positions. The norms are d clared, the evaluation is fair and bo devils get their due. Or is it that secula ism does not deal with devils but on has a demonology? I even wish he h time to examine how signatories of t scientific temper are now happily BJ And behind this lies an importa question. Is there a link between sec larism and the scientific temper or c fascists be good scientists? I think t kind of spring cleaning is necessary f secularism to thaw. A clearer statemer of the past and a need to move aw from secularist ideologues and the repressive apparatus. You then don have to worry about idiot accusation of "pseudo-secularism." Authenticit and playfulness begins with open-ness error, recognition of error, and laugh ter. Do secularists laugh or do they, like L.K. Advani confuse the authoritarian with the authoritative? Both are idea candidates for the Smyle tooth gel ad

Bharucha's critique of *Sahmat* sets th stage for such open-ness. His section on the IPTA are fascinating even a vignettes. I only wish he had elabo rated more on the gentle secularism o Dina Pathak, or even of a Balraj Sahn because theirs was secularism as a wa of life and therefore intensely appealing Bharucha is sensitive to the possibili ties and even the construction of IPT as nostalgia, even Utopia and is als clear about its ideological constraint and the quarrels between artists an ideologues, both unlivable groups. wish he had followed through an inter esting and obvious question. How much of art remains in these shows Are they only secular or was there art istry left in these fragments of secula realism. Some of these performances seem utterly boring. I like my secular ism to be entertaining. I don't want t be educated technology mission style

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Bharucha generally evades the expertise of the secular. I wish he had, in a playful way, contrasted *Sahmat* with DSF or KSSP. One needs a Brechtian look at these latter groups who also function as custodians of the secular. If the secular is not just a world of the religiously empty but one where religion is no longer the only determinant of identity, then the role of religion in this hummock of identities must be refigured. He has asides on this in his comments on Birju Maharaj and Chandralekha but Bharucha is still walking on eggs. I wish he would Zorba it.

Bharucha gets caught in the divide between science and arts and he unconsciously does not include popular science groups as cultural workers. What is the relation of science to secularism? What is the relation of science to religion? The picture of the old ideological battle is tripe. Historians have time and again shown the roots of science and the scientific crisis in its religious world views. One has to sniff a Duhem, Jaki or Yates to see this with clarity. If so, the relation between religion and science has to be reworked and continuously reinvented. Unfortunately this becomes the big silence in Bharucha's work. It is the illiteracy about religion that makes secularism so truncated and rickety. It is strange that Bharucha refers to this in his study of the Third Sector Movement in Brazil, the best part of the book. It is interesting that when he deals with secularism in India, he deals with it as text, as grammar, as code, but when he studies Brazil, he looks and discusses secularism as a performance. It is the performative aspect of secularism that one misses in his discussion of *Sahmat* or IPTA.

In fact there are several quotes in the book which can be read both ways. Bharucha quotes a policeman as saying "No communal riot can last more than 24 hours without the consent of the state". One is equally worried that most secular spectacles suffer from the same problem. He quotes Tagore as observing:

> "When religions travel from their sacred sources, they lose their original dynamic rigour and degenerate into an arrogance of piety, into an utter emptiness crammed with irrational habits and mechanical practices..."

When I was reading it I substituted secularism for religion and the sentence made equal sense and it is this that needs to be addressed.

There is a lot of this book that is a close analysis of Mani Ratnam's *Roja*. It is good stuff. Bharucha feeds it through the grid of fascism, patriarchy, state and of course *Roja* fails gloriously. You can no longer say a *Roja* is a *Roja* is a *Roja* after film critics have finished with it. Seminars on *Roja* probably have more re-runs than the film itself. But what Bharucha leaves untouched is why or what in these films taps into the unconscious of the masses. What is it that makes one prefer a Barjatya to an Anand Patwardhan? What makes the latter look artificial? In fact when Patwardhan explains his own movie one does not want to see it. It is over determined explanation. Fortunately his film eludes his own explanations of it.

I would still watch *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* than all the people Bharucha recommends. Why is it I feel I am being dragged to a boring seminar, a didactic lecture, a politically correct behaviour class when I approach a Vivan Sundaram, Anand Patwardhan or Satish Sharma? It is this that secularists need to ask. Partly Bharucha's theory of culture is theory of exhibits. One senses an unease about popular culture. Maybe I am imagining it but Bharucha strokes popular cultures as if he is petting someone else's pet line. Nonetheless Bharucha's book is a good beginning. He has opened up the internal critique of the Left, and the secular, and it is precisely this readiness that creates the secular as a public theatre. May it multiply but not in capital letters.

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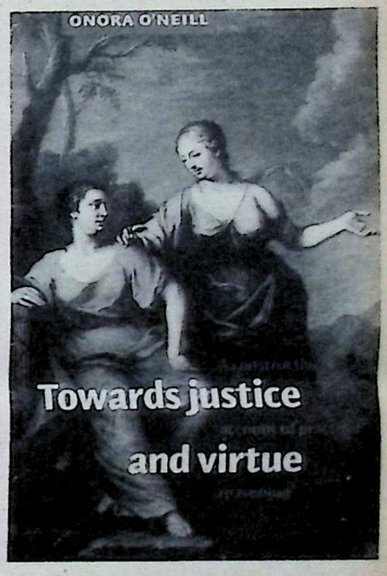
"Who Counts?"

T.C.A. Ramanuja Chari

TOWARDS JUSTICE AND VIRTUE: A CONSTRUCTIVE ACCOUNT OF PRACTICAL REASONING

By Onara O'Neill

Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 230, £12.95



The lives of humans are shaped by fundamental categories and concepts that, over long stretches of time, have been a part of their being and thought and sense of their identity—part of what makes them human. In pre-modern societies these fundamental categories and concepts were formulated either by command or by tradition. 'Command', usually attributed to divine ordinance and emanating from an authority which, by convention or common consent, was unquestioned or unquestionable. It therefore, admitted of no rational critique or exception or exemption. But where the code evolved by tradition over a period of time, an element of choice can be detected as what went into the code grew out of social interaction and exigencies of contingent human situations.

Tradition initially provided, if the Promethean myth is to be believed, security and mutual protection as the fundamental category which, in turn encouraged living together. Social life needed rules, conventions and customs to regulate the living together. Man, thus, came to live under the matrix of some injunctions of universal applicability like those proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount or those contained in the sacred books of other religions. These injunctions transformed themselves into principles of justice understood as a reper'oire of rights, protection, and entitlements that apply irrespective of persons and have overriding force wherever they apply. The technical proficiency of not violating such codes of conduct was regarded as virtue.

Homer saw justice as being identical with order and authority. Plato derived justice from instinct and inspiration. Aristotle derived the principles of justice by logical analysis of the mores and customs of existing societies. For both Plato and Aristotle the principle of balance and harmony became the test of a just society and of a just individual. What was common to both was a comprehensive idea of virtue of which justice was a part and an aspect. Justice and virtue stayed aligned till the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment.

When the West got its Enlightenment, Reason and the sovereignty of the individual were annointed as the core principles of the human way of life. In the cultural milieu that followed 'modernism' became the dominant mode and the fundamental categories constituting Justice became matters of choice. Rational justification was not the only criterion of choice. The sovereignty of the individual and possessive individualism born out of enlightened self-interest certified 'pragmatic' context-specific justification as the criterion. Thus justice and virtue became rivals and antinomies in philosophic thought about ethics.

Onara O'Neill investigates in her *Towards Justice and Virtue* whether positioning of the two as rival and binary,

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'Command', usually attributed to divine ordinance and emanating from an authority which, by convention or common consent, was unquestioned or unquestionable. It therefore, admitted of no rational critique or exception or exemption.

instead of being complementary categories is warranted by logic or practice. She begins with an overview of the current thinking on the subject in the disciplines of ethics and political philosophy. She notices that contemporary thought views justice as a bundle of universal and abstract principles, and virtue as the measure for judging and responding to particular situations and relationships.

O'Neill demonstrates in chapter one, reasonably convincingly, that the disjunction between justice and virtue is historically anomalous and not well substantiated, and has been erected by making a range of questionable assumptions about action and reason. She argues that politics and ethics are, essentially, domains of activity and the reasoning that governs this domain must, in the final analysis, be practical reasoning—that is, 'reasoning which we and others can use both in personal and public life not merely to judge and appraise what is going on, not merely to assess what has been done, but to guide activity. The activities to be guided range from institution building and reforms to the daily acts and attitudes of personal life' (p. 2).

This demand has two aspects. The first is that some way or ways of guiding activity must be shown to have the sort of authority that would allow it to be described as reasoned. The second is that those ways of guiding action must be practical in that they can help agents with quite limited and determined capacities to live their lives (p. 2).

'Practical reason' sounds mysterious. What O'Neill wants that phrase to mean is that it is not sufficient for thought on ethics to began either with some conception of the objectively good, whether inherent or transcendent, or from some conception of the subjectively good or from the particularities of common or individual life. It is necessary, further, that any account of ethics must include, in addition to convincing starting points, convincing prescriptions regarding methods for proceeding from those starting points. In chapter two she suggests how an account of practical reason may be constructed without relying on unproved/unprovable assumptions (e.g.; human behaviour being rational or autonomous at all times and under all circumstances; the perfect competition of economics; idealized notions about the categories and practices of traditions or the actual sensibilities and commitments of individuals).

Onara O'Neill says that 'practical reason' can be end-oriented, that is, reasoned action is directed by moral considerations or ideals; or be instrumental, that is, directed by subjective preferences, desires and conceptions of what is good; or be action-oriented, that is, be informed by principles that can be followed by all in the relevant domain; or be particularistic, that is, reasoned action is informed by norms and commitments of individuals. She finds all these approaches to be somewhat inadequate and feels persuaded to adopt a 'limited and strictly modal Kantian account which identifies it with reliance on principles which (it is judged) can be principles for all, where the scope of 'all' is taken to vary with context (p. 52). She explains that such an account must answer two questions, namely, by whom should that type of reasoning be followable and what makes that so followable. The first question relates to the scope of such reasoning and the second to the criterion of acceptability.

Scope is determined by situationally relevant demands and compulsions. Thus, a country well equipped with nuclear capability may not like other countries to acquire even matching, let alone superior, capabilities. Another country feeling threatened or apprehending potent threats to its integrity or very existence may like to acquire superior capability including nuclear capability. The former would find certain principles of thought and action followable which may not be such to the latter. Both would justify their particular choices on the footing of equally plausible principles of justice and virtue. The situationally relevant demands and compulsions would make the choice of the particular combination of principles of thought and action acceptable to one protagonist and not so to the other.

O'Neill's effort is to construct a model of practical reasoning of which the focus will be 'action, hence principles of action indeed specifically universal principles of action' yet, not to scare away or raise the hackles of the opponents of ethical universalism.

O'Neill does not seek to inquire into the validity of the choice from amongst the rival perspectives. She attempts to show how 'practical reason' can be constructed by either. O'Neill says: 'A convincing conception of practical reasoning although highly abstract, still must start from the gritty realities of human life: it cannot provide reasons for anyone to adopt principles which they cannot adopt. Since practical reasoning has many audiences, some more restricted and others more inclusive, it may and indeed must on different occasions rely on more abstract and on more specific views of the character of those audiences (p. 61). [Kant described reasoning which appealed to restricted audiences as 'private use of reasoning' and that which appealed to more inclusive audiences as 'public uses of reasoning'.]

For constructing either type of reasoning O'Neill adopts the example made famous by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant explained that the wish may be for constructing a tower that would reach to the heavens but the available stock of material would permit only a single storey dwelling. Then only a single storey dwelling can be constructed. O'Neill calls this technique for constructing the edifice of practical reasoning 'constructivism'. This is no more than a technique of coordination in using available material, as for constructing a building, to formulate a paradigm or thesis in an intellectual discourse. She says: 'Constructivism is in the end no more, but no less, than an attempt to work towards a result that is neither unattainable for those whose lives are both led using the categories and norms of a restricted milieu and connected to those others with different categories and norms, nor unsustainable for what they could become' (p. 64).

O'Neill's effort is to construct a model of practical reasoning of which the focus will be 'action, hence principles of action indeed specifically universal principles of action' yet, not to scare away or raise the hackles of the opponents of ethical universalism. The latter variety of philosophers of ethics charge Kantian, and even utilitarian positions of excessive preoccupation with inclusive, universal and prescriptive uniformity of principles and rules in particular with principles of obligation. They chafe at the resulting rigidity of application, particularly in relation to the principles of obligation. They charge their rivals of sanctimonious lack of sensitivity or concern for the infinite variety and difference between persons and situations of human interest and poignancy. It is this variety that provides the material and premises for formulating principles of universal applicability. Onara O'Neill has chosen to render a 'more limitedly and strictly modal Kantian account' of practical reason. Therefore, her anxiety not to offend the sensibilities of the advocates of context specific virtue is understandable as her purpose is, apparently, to construct a thesis which commands wider intellectual acceptability.

The first step in this process of construction is to determine the focus of practical reasoning which O'Neill does in chapter 3. In her Introduction to the book at p. 4 'chapter 3 argues that, '... action, hence principles of action, indeed universal principles of action must be the focus of practical reasoning.' She explains that 'action' may be understood or explained in different ways. One is in the light of the 'ends' that it is intended to achieve. Another is in the light of the 'principles' which guide that action or which that action embodies. A third way is to explain that action by the source (dispositions, traits of character, motive) which sets in motion that action. A fourth way is to explain it by the form it takes. Thoughts on ethics choose one or more of these different ways of explaining 'action' and thus arise different prescriptions, proscriptions, recommendations and warnings regarding the right type of action.

O'Neill however seems to be somewhat uncertain about what her focus should be. She says at p. 64 that chapter 3 will argue that action, hence principles of action rather than either sources or the results of action, must be the primary focus of practical reasoning including any ethical and political reasoning, and including reasoning about virtue.' But at p. 89 she says; 'First, action is the primary focus of all practical reasoning including practical reasoning which treats either the sources or the results of action as the primary matter of ethical concern.' This vacillation is, perhaps, due to her commitment to a Kant inspired 'modal account' and her unwillingness to hurt advocates of contex

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Towards Justice and Virtue, which is described as a constructive account of practical reasoning is a book by a plumber for other plumbers in the academic disciplines of ethics and political philosophy. As such it is a little difficult reading for the lay reader.

and interest specific virtue and their aversion to universal and binding principles or generalized rules however indeterminate these may be. Thus her conclusions in chapter 3 fall in place.

These conclusions are: 'Action must be grasped under descriptions that are intelligible to those who reason about it... The need for intelligible description does not mean that practical reasoning must or can avoid abstraction or that it cannot use principles... Universal principles which abstract from many predicates, need not prescribe uniform action, even within their domain; they may prescribe differentiated action, and they must underdetermine action... While the degree of underdetermination of action is open, there is no reason to think that the underdetermination is radical in the sense which Wittgenstien's discussion of rule-following is sometimes thought to suggest' (p. 89). She goes on to explain that her intention is to defuse anxiety about principles, and specifically about principles of universal form or inclusive scope. She admits that her arguments do not show either which practical principles are ethically important or which sorts of practical principles are ethical or for which domains universal principles of various sorts might hold (p. 89).

After 'focus' comes 'scope' of ethical concern which is dealt with in chapter 4. The argument of this chapter is that the area of ethical consideration is determined by how particular actors conceive of the role of themselves and those with whom they interact in particular situations or on a continued basis. O'Neill says that 'what is assumed in action and in attitudes cannot be disowned for ethical purposes so can be used to fix the proper scope of ethical consideration in a given context' (p. 4). In her view the proper questions to be asked for determining the scope of ethical consideration are not 'who or what counts as moral agent or subject?' or 'What are the criteria of personhood?' but 'Whom or what do particular agents have grounds to include within the scope of their practical reasoning and of their ethical consideration?' She considers that the former set of questions give rise to futile debates that demand but do not yield satisfactory answers. In answer to the latter question she says no one can exclude from the domain of reasoning or ethical consideration those others with whom they interact or those with or against whom they act. The bottomline is that each individual has a world of his or her own which is altogether different from and far smaller than the world at large. Consequently, the scope of ethical consideration is not monolith but small, atomised, different and context- and interest-specific. She deftly weaves into this the place of distant strangers and future generations.

O'Neill, then, in chapter 5, turns her attention—after showing that 'popular arguments' about the incompatibility of justice and virtue are unconvincing—to analyse the structure, content and the compatibility of the principles of justice and virtue. She points out that even though 'justice' may be abstract and universal and 'virtue' is responsive to particularities a measure of abstraction which does not encourage idealized conceptions of those abstractions is an unavoidable feature of all reasoning, 'hence of practical reasoning, and indeed of all thought and language' (p. 122). She develops the idea that a modal conception, as the one that she has chosen, will prefer principles which state 'requirements' which are capable of guiding action. This capacity arises from the feature that 'requirements' link up acts and categories of acts and also the actors and their others with or against whom they interact. She illustrates the linkages by the example that 'if A owes B an act of a certain type or its omission, B will be entitled to such performance or omission' and A can demand specific performance and B is under an obligation to comply. This and similar linkages enable construction of a structure of practical requirements.

She goes on to elaborate the point that between the two concepts of 'rights' and 'obligations' the liberal preference has been more for 'rights', that is in favour of the recipient and less for 'obligations', that is, the persons bound by a duty to act or not to act in a certain manner. O'Neill prefers an emphasis on obligations and constructs a type which is made up of universal and special 'obligations.' She classifies universal obligations into perfect and imperfect obligations. Such perfect obligations are held by all, owed to all and their counterpart are 'liberty rights', embodied in legal and economic systems (e.g. right of access to public places with the corresponding obligation of one and all to desist from obstruction; 'welfare rights', that is, rights to goods and services without which human well-being will be gravely threatened with the counterpart of obligation on the part of those specified others or specified institutions charged with specific performance of the duty to provide those goods and services). Imperfect obligations are held by all but owed to none and do not have counterpart rights.

Special rights are, again divided into perfect and imperfect obligations. The former are held by some and owed to specified others with counterpart special rights created by special transactions and relationships. Imperfect special obligations are held by some and are owed to none but are embodied in the ethos of special relationships and practices. These have no counterpart rights.

From this scaffolding O'Neill proceeds to establish in chapters 6 and 7, principles of justice and virtue which can 'provide guidelines for constructing just and virtuous institutions and practices and for leading just and virtuous lives' (p. 153). She discounts 'liberty' and 'equality' as basic to justice—'liberty' for the reason that it necessarily means that each should have the largest 'equal liberty compatible with like liberty for all'. This would need a metric for liberty which would create more problems than it could solve. Liberty is, in the final analysis, a bundle of rights inhering in specific individuals and need specific legislation to make these enforceable. 'Equality' is discounted 'because equality is a radically incomplete predicate, so hospitable to countless differing completions' (p. 162). She, then, proceeds, through meticulous arguments, to formulate inclusive principles of justice and virtue. Onara O'Neill formulates rejection of injury as the obligation of justice and rejection of indifference and neglect as the obligation of virtue.

Towards Justice and Virtue, which is described as a constructive account of practical reasoning is a book by a plumber for other plumbers in the academic disciplines of ethics and political philosophy. As such it is a little difficult reading for the lay reader. But Onara O'Neill makes the reading somewhat easy by the comfortable diction in which she couches her findings and conclusions at different places in the book. She states at relevant places what her argument is going to be and what she has found previously.

The book, in the main, is a recapitulation of the current status of the debate regarding the theoretical superiority of universal principles of justice and the particularities of context specific virtuous conduct. Therefore the absence of a serious discussion about the substantive content of justice and virtue is understandable. The omission will however, disappoint serious students of the two disciplines. So will the absence of a discussion as to why 'obligations' should take precedence over 'rights', particularly in the developing countries where denial of access to life chances is a major social and development problem.

The concept of justice signified different things at different periods ranging from the 'Matsya Nyaya', advantage of the stronger (Sophists), security (Homer and Hobbes), commonwealth of rights and obligations related to the individual's station in life (Plato), Aristotle's 'some sort of equality', freedom (Spencer), the Marxian 'from each according to his capacity and to each according to his needs', to John Rawls's contractarian theory and other modern formulations of social justice and distributive justice. There is also the attractive principle of ancient vintage—the Suum Cuique (to each his due) principle. A significant omission is a well-laid out discussion of these various perceptions in relation to the preferred proposition set out in the book. However, the favoured principle of rejection of direct and indirect injury as the principle of justice and of rejection of direct and indirect indifference and neglect can be a necessary implication and consequence of Suum Cuique. Onara O'Neill has succeeded, in considerable measure, in keeping on the right side of both the advocates of justice and virtue who do not wish to abandon their respective briefs that the two are binary categories.

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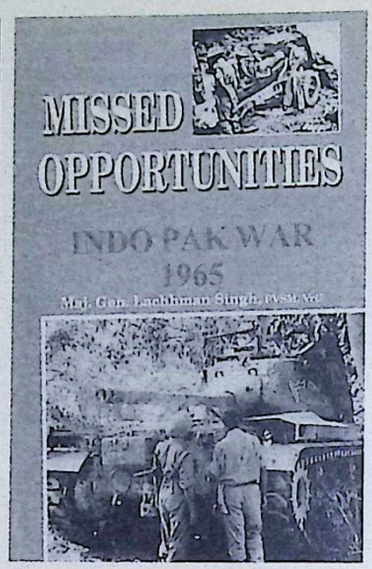
Lessons of History

Lt. Gen. J.F.R. Jacob

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES—INDO-PAK WAR 1965

By Maj. Gen. Lachhman Singh

Natraj Publishers, Dehra Dun, 1997, pp. 364, Rs. 425.00



Maj. Gen., Lachhman Singh is a distinguished soldier who commanded a division with great competence during the 1971 liberation of Bangladesh. Lachhman Singh has written an excellent account of the 1965 Indo-Pak War. Lachhman Singh was at that time GSO I in the Military Operations Directorate at Army HQ and as such was involved in the overall direction of operations. The official history of the 1965 operations has not yet been published (the Henderson Brooks Report is yet to see the light of day). It has been edited by the various concerned ministries and will not paint an accurate picture of the actual operations. The only other publication is Maj. Gen. Joginder Singh's account in his book *Behind the Scenes*. This book gives a brief account of the events prior to August 1947 and immediately after. More relevant are the chapters on geopolitics and military geography. The chapters on the Armies of India and Pakistan and the Air Forces of the two countries cover much ground and should be of great interest to the general reader. The author comments on the Indian National Army (INA). He quotes a senior Indian officer on the subject: "Either they or we are right. Both cannot be right. I would prefer to believe that I am right . . . In my opinion the oath to a soldier is like virginity to a damsel". No mention however is made of the Mutiny of the Royal Indian Navy in 1946 or of the "strike" in the Royal Indian Air Force. Today's unrest in the Indian Air. Force is not unique and the action taken by F.M. Auchinleck should be studied. He describes Nehru's and Menon's approach to defence quoting Gen. Sir Rob Lockhart when he sought the government's threat assessment. Nehru told him, "we see no military threats" and later in 1951 when General Cariappa raised the question of NEFA Nehru told him "you mind only Kashmir and Pakistan". The author quotes Krishna Menon's address to Army officers in Shimla in August 1962 at which he was present "Pakistan is our only enemy. The western Powers are trying their tricks to make India and China fight. Let me tell you that China will not fight us" (this after clashes in Ladakh).

Lachhman Singh points out that both Menon and Nehru introduced a degree of politicization of the armed forces. He quotes Maj. Gen. Palit, it "was Krishna Menon who was primarily culpable for the practice of general officers establishing direct contact with politicians. . . . Kaul had easy and direct access to Nehru. . . and wielded a considerable degree of unconstitutional authority." Also described is Thimayya's clash with Menon over Kaul's out of turn promotion, his resignation, Nehru's request to Thimayya to withdraw and Nehru's consequent disparging remarks in Parliament. He touches on the enquiry ordered against Sam Manekshaw for anti-national activities. Manekshaw was eventually cleared of the charges.

In the chapter on the Indian Air Force he highlights the lack of coordination at the Chief of Staff's level. He quotes Air Chief Marshall P.C. Lall: "He (Chaudhuri), discussed the pros and cons with the Prime Minister and Defence Minister, the Air Chief was also informed some time later. This was done through informal meetings from which the Naval Chief was excluded. . . The Chief of Staff's Committee and the joint intelligence and planning staffs were completely bypassed. No contingency plans were drafted nor were the three Services asked to define the parts they would have to play . . . He treated the whole business as his personal affair. . . with the Air Force as a passive spectator and the Navy out of it altogether".

Lachhman Singh points out that both Menon and Nehru introduced a degree of politicization of the armed forces. He quotes Maj. Gen. Palit, "it was Krishna Menon who was primarily culpable for the practice of general officers establishing direct contact with politicians.

Lachhman outlines the Indian and Pakistani strategies (or perhaps lack of them) and the outline plans of both India and Pakistan. Pakistan's plan was:

a. To induct guerillas into Jammu and Kashmir (OP Gibraltar)
b. In the Sialkot sector to have a defensive posture with one infantry division (A newly raised armoured division was to be in reserve).
c. In the Lahore sector 10 Pak infantry and 11 infantry divisions were to be deployed in a defensive role.
d. Pakistan's strike force of 1 armoured and 7 infantry divisions were to capture the road railbridge at Beas and thus cut off Amritsar.
e. In the Sulaimanke sector one infantry brigade was to defend their enclave covering the headworks. The area south of it was to be defended by the Desert Rangers.
f. The Pakistani 12 Division was to have overall responsibility for Jammu & Kashmir.

It would be seen from the above that Pakistani capabilities and consequently their aims were limited. The overall Indian approach due to similar constraints also had limited aims. The Indian plan was:

a. 11 Corps, 15 and 7 infantry division, 4 Mountain division and 2 armoured and 67 Infantry brigades were to secure the east bank of the Ichogil canal.
b. 1 Corps with 1 armoured, 6 mountain, 14 infantry, 26 infantry divisions to launch an offensive towards Pasrur from the Samba Ramgarh area and secure the home bank of the Marala Ravi link canal.
c. In Jammu and Kashmir 15 Corps was to eliminate guerillas and their bases across the Cease Fire Line.

The chapter on the Air Forces of India and Pakistan gives a good background to their development and later employment. He quotes Air Chief Marshal Lal on the deficiencies "in the Army-Air Force link up at virtually every level of command and control" and Maj. Gen. Joginder Singh that "Army and Air Force worked in splendid isolation." Fortunately for us the same scenario obtained on the Pakistani side.

The author describes the operations of 1965 in detail. He highlights the successful and unsuccessful offensives and battles and draws the relevant lessons from them. These detailed accounts of the campaign should be studied by the Infantry School and College of Combat and the lessons brought out by the author taken note of.

The Khem Karan battle was perhaps the most critical and decisive battle of this war. The Pakistani offensive was halted. The Commander of the Pakistani 1 artillery brigade Brigadier Shammi was killed in this battle. (This reviewer and Brigadier Shammi had served together in World War II). The Pakistanis suffered heavy losses—some 70 Patton tanks. Unfortunately we were unable to follow the retreating Pakistanis. There has been a controversy as to the apprehensions of the Chief of Army Staff during the battle of Khem Karan. According to Lt. Gen. B.M. Kaul, General Chaudhuri got cold feet while the battle of Khem Karan was still in progress and decided to take up an alternative position several miles to the rear. In this connection General Chaudhuri, then India's High Commissioner in Canada, wrote to General Kumaramangalam the Army Chief referring to Kaul's account of Chaudhuri's role during the battle of Khem Karan. Chaudhuri asked Kumaramangalam to caution Harbaksh Singh (Western Army Commander during the war) to keep mum on the subject for the good of them all. Fortunately wiser counsel and the courage of commanders in the field prevailed and we stood firm. A withdrawal would have been disastrous.

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The operations of 1 Corps in the Sialkot sector are described. Considering that 1 Corps was the strike corps of the Army the gains in this sector were limited and after some initial gains the Pakistanis regained the initiative. The author quotes Gen. Kumaramangalam the Vice Chief of Army Staff in the context of the lack of impetus of our 1 Armoured Division. "Have you ever seen a buffalo in the summer in a pond? It does not go forward. It does not go back, it just sits. That is what the Armoured Division is doing".

The chapter on administration highlights the importance of logistics and brings out the inadequacies of ammunition replenishment. Faulty ammunition planning led to shortages in some sectors. In contrast in 1971 the logistical planning in the eastern sector was thorough and no shortages were experienced during the liberation of Bangladesh.

The author describes the lack of assessment on the part of commanders and the missed opportunities. He mentions China's threatening posture and support of Pakistan. China demanded dismantling of some defensive works in Sikkim. We unfortunately gave up and withdrew from the crest line of the Jelap La. This reviewer had later to offer the occupation of heights commanding the pass in order to redress our previous pull out.

The 1965 war was indecisive with no winner. On the Indian side we missed many opportunities. Some commanders lacked initiative and resources were frittered away. It had according to the author "been a war to no purpose. India could claim to have defeated Pak designs on Kashmir while Pakistan boasted about halting an invasion by a larger Indian Army. Both sides were content to claim victory to their people".

Maj. Gen. Lachhman Singh is to be complimented on producing a detailed analytical account of the 1965 war. The battles are well illustrated by clear maps. This book should be of interest to the general reader and is worthy of study by staff and colleges of combat. The General and administrative staffs at Service Headquarters should also study the lessons from this conflict. Many of the mistakes were repeated in the Western Theatre in the war of 1971. We have a tendency to ignore the lessons of history. Perhaps one day we will take note of Napoleon's maxim "Fools learn by their own mistakes, I prefer to learn from other people's mistakes".

Lt. Gen. J.F.R. Jacob is the author of Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation *(Manohar Books, 1997). He was responsible for the planning and execution of the campaign for the liberation of Bangladesh.*

The Royal Road to Bliss

Neelima Luthra

MEDITATION KNOW-HOW

By Swami Sivananda

Published by N. Ananthanarayanan by arrangement with The Divine Life Society, 1996, pp. 210, Rs. 100.00

Sivananda gives a working knowledge about the gradual removal of depression, sloth, restlessness and attachment and how to cultivate sattvic gunas (pure virtues). Not only the fundamental problems regarding time, food, place, posture etc. which are suitable for meditation dealt with, but also psychological states like ksipta, muddha, viksipta, ekagra and nirudha are fully explored. Exercises like tratak (steady gazing) and visualization are suggested for quick interiorization. Creative solutions sans dogmatism and rigidity are given to enable the spiritual aspirant to switch off the five sense telephones.

The Fall led to the expulsion of Adam and Eve both from a geographical as well as an inner Eden. The need to regain that immortal legacy is urgent since humans are continuing to drift away from their centre of gravity. Meditation is the royal road on which man can travel to trace the roots back to God and unleash his/her psychic Being. Meditation is the means by which the kingdom of God is discovered within the hridaya-guha (heart centre) as Atma (soul) and one can connect to one's own true self as sat-chit-ananda. Swami Sivananda explores meditation as direct experience: a hot line to God, which is not a 'reverie' or a 'hypnotic trance' but a 'solid living truth'. His book is a practical how-to primer of meditation, which insists on direct perception as the true measure of spirituality. Meditation of all kinds deals with the Manas (mind) which Sivananda calls a 'bundle of impressions, ideas and habits' and how to transcend or cause its death (manonasa). The book addresses itself to the vital questions: how to deconstruct the mind without destroying it and how to attain a positive zero point existence which is beyond the dualities of Good and Evil (in the Nietzschean sense).

The book is broadly divisible in two parts, the first deals with the practical aspects of meditation as a science based on physical, moral and mental discipline, which is initially static and is mainly mental concentration to rise above body consciousness. The second deals with actual meditation as a dynamic principle that leads to the transcendence of the mind and yoking of the jivatma with the paramatma. The emphasis on a systematic sadhana based on commonsense demystifies meditation and places it beyond the realm of the esoteric.

The subtle relationship amongst attention (jagrit), concentration (ekagra) and meditation (chetan) is analyzed. Attention is defined as the predominance of perception over sensation. Concentration is the collecting of scattered thoughts and focussing them like the laser beam on a single idea. Meditation is the constant flow of the same idea or 'svajatiya—vritti pravah.'

Both the Upanishadic goal of inner inquiry which Sivananda sums up as, 'Who am I? What is this universe or samsara? Where are we born? On what do we rest?' and Patanjali Maharishi's eightfold path (ashtang yoga) to self-realization together form the backbone of the book. Like Patanjali, Sivananda highlights the need to condition the mind through yama (mental hygiene), niyama (moral hygiene), asana (steady posture), pranayam (steadiness of the breath), and pratyahar (withdrawal of the senses). Dhyan or meditation is the sixth step, which leads to the gradual ascent on the spiritual ladder from the muladhara chakra to the sahasrara.

Sivananda gives a working knowledge about the gradual removal of depression, sloth, restlessness and attachment and how to cultivate sattvic gunas (pure virtues). Not only the fundamental problems regarding time, food, place, posture etc. which are suitable for meditation dealt with, but also psychological states like ksipta, muddha, viksipta, ekagra and nirudha are fully explored. Exercises like tratak (steady gazing) and visualization are suggested for quick interiorization. Creative solutions sans dogmatism and rigidity are given to enable the spiritual aspirant to switch off the five sense telephones. Various pitfalls like losing the balance between spirituality and materiality, oversocialization and spiritual vampirism etc. are scientifically analyzed.

The descriptions of different types of meditations like Raj yoga, Hatha yoga, Jnana yoga, Saguna and Nirguna, Japa sahita and Japa rahit reinforce the personal nature of meditation, which varies according to the spiritual state of the aspirant. Sivananda strikes the balance between the idea of meditation as a science based on external principles and the idea of meditation as an intimate encounter with the self, a gradual unfolding of the various leaves of consciousness.

There is no attempt to draw a veil over spiritual experiences, which ensue after the transcendence of the astral and the causal bodies. Without over intellectualization, the final goal of meditation, which is samadhi, is pointed out through the subtle example of a salt doll melting in the ocean. The Turiya State caused by samadhi is beyond the Freudian map of human consciousness. Sivananda depicts this very state wherein, 'the seer, sight, the image, seen, or the knower, knowable and knowledge or the subject and object become one', as the goal of meditation.

The book upholds the Vedantic tradition by focussing on kaivalya or liberation as the ultimate aim of meditation. Hence, the journey which began with the existential question, 'ko aham asmi?' or Who am I? ends with the answer, 'aham brahmasmi' or I am that. Meditation according to Sivananda is the only 'royal road to the attainment of salvation' and the only means to practice the spiritual truth underlined by all the religions of mankind.

Neelima Luthra teaches English at Vivekananda College, University of Delhi.

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Left Politics in Indian History

G.P. Sharma

THE AGRARIAN DRAMA: THE LEFTISTS AND THE RURAL POOR IN INDIA 1934–1951

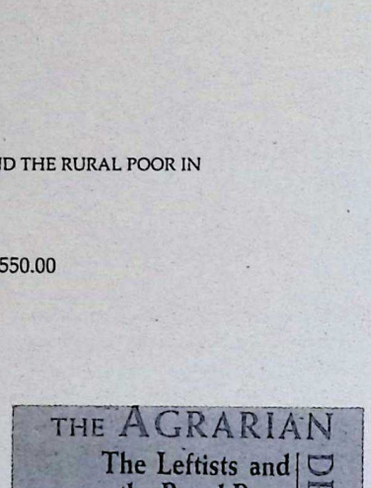
By Amit Kumar Gupta

Manohar, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 516, Rs. 550.00

The book under review encapsulates the most momentous period of Left politics in Indian History Decrying attempts at negative portrayal of the Left in the national movement, the author argues for a vibrant and committed Left ceaselessly working to attain the twin goals of national independence and emancipation of the rural masses. Breaking loose from the conventional method of chapterization, the author has broadly divided the crucial years 1936–1945 into three parts. Each part, dealing with a particular phase of agrarian struggle of the rural poor, underlines the role of the Left parties.

The discussion begins with the era of the United Front which saw the coming together of the two Left parties, the CSP (Congress Socialist Party) and the CPI (Communist Party of India). Both shared a common perception in regard to peasant mobilization which was to be based on an over-arching alliance of all sections of the peasantry.

The common concern of all such like-minded people led to the formation of a third all India political forum—the AIKS (All India Kisan Sabha) with the specific task of voicing peasant grievances. Though the AIKS was dominated by the rich peasants, the author feels that it was able to represent the interests of the rural poor. This raises some doubts because ideologically and theoretically the Left may have been committed to the cause of the rural poor but in practice, unlike the 1940s, it was not able to achieve any tangible results and the reasons are not hard to seek. The peasant agitations of the 1930s, which started in the wake of economic depression, were mostly led by rich and middle peasants. The rural poor, who largely paid their rent through division of crop and received wages, generally remained unaffected. As the Left parties' political campaign coincided with this tumultuous phase they could not have possibly avoided the ongoing political upheavel. Hence the Left's first liaison began with the better off section of the peasants. The imperative for building an agrarian base was so strong that both the CSP and the CPI vied with each other to win them over. The cause of these peasants could not have been ignored because of other reasons too. One, the anti-zamindari feeling, which had been continuously gathering strength, became more virulent during the time of depression because of frequent evictions for non-payment of rents. Resistance to eviction was true of all sections of the peasantry and provided a broader platform for political mobilization. The anti-zamindari stir became the main plank of the Communists in particular, because of the Comintern's stress on the removal of all vestiges of a feudal system before allowing capitalist farming to flourish and pave the way for transition to socialism. Two, as village leaders and headmen, the dominant peasants also exercised influence over the local community. They could mould public opinion and easily garner support against the zamindars.



The need for wider mobilization, however, did not deter the Left parties from focussing upon the specific problems of the rural poor in their manifestoes. As has been rightly pointed out, the CSP in particular played a key role in radicalizing the agrarian programme by including demands such as "abolition of all form of landlordism without compensation, redistribution of land to the peasant, promotion of co-operative and collective farming by the state and transfer of all power to the producing masses". It also wanted these demands to be incorporated in the Faizpur agrarian programme of the Congress in 1936 but the latter refused to oblige. However, it was not just these demands or the concern for the problem of the peasants but their active participation in agrarian struggles that brought the CSP close to the rural folk and allowed it to infiltrate the ranks of the Bihar Kisan Sabha in good numbers in 1934–35.

The CPI on the other hand, did not show the same degree of pragmatism as the CSP, although their association with the producing masses dated back to an early period. The formation of Workers and Peasants Party (WPP), a political front of the CPI, in the early 1920s failed to create much impact on the peasants despite a radical programme of agrarian reform including land to the peasants. Its obsession with the working class movement led to the neglect of the peasants. However, the party's strategy changed in the light of the Comintern's emphasis on participation in a broader movement against imperialism as well as indigenous exploiting classes. The acceptance of United Front brought them a shade closer to reality, for no party aspiring to become a political force could afford to ignore the Indian countryside. No sooner had they joined the United Front than they began making their presence felt within the provincial Kisan Sabha as well as the All India Kisan Sabha through active participation and more sophisticated arguments regarding socialist transformation. However, the Communists were handicapped by the lack of sufficient number of cadres in the countryside.

Comparing CSP's and CPI's role during 1934–39 one can notice certain similarities. One, political compulsions did not allow the two Left parties to specifically concentrate on the problems of the rural poor. Two, both parties had formal tie-up with their parent organizations. The CSP's position was more paradoxical because ideologically it did not have anything in common with the Congress except the goal of national liberation. However, it continued to nurture faith in the latter and expected to turn the organization their way through the instrumentality of Jawaharlal Nehru who was himself not able to break away from the hegemonic influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Likewise, the CPI also remained under the shadow of the Cominterm for long to be able to develop an independent strategy of socialist transformation. Finally, the leaders of both political parties came from urban and semi-urban background and a good number of them happened to be labour leaders.

This brings us to an interesting discussion about the role of outsiders in rural unrests and the issue of peasant autonomy. To say that the urban leaders were the initiators of peasant protests and the rural masses were waiting to be led is to do grave injustice to the latter's cause. It may be pointed out that popular protests, in the very nature of things, had to be autonomous because of elements of local initiative and spontaneity. However with the onset of the 20th century and the broadening of the political horizon new ideological forces began competing against each other to extend their area of influence in the countryside. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for the ru-

Dwelling upon the popular aspects of the Quit India Movement, the author bemoans the inability of the Left to capitalize on the mass upsurge. This observation seems to be a little unfair because the movement at the popular level had its own logic and tended to chart its own course often marked by violence. Given the tendency for such protests to defy authority or any kind of formal control, it was difficult for the constitutionally organized political parties to extend their hold over these.

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ral folk to remain in isolation even if they wanted to. At least one section of the peasantry responded quite enthusiastically because it could easily identify its interests with the new political waves. Most political parties were so seized by the response that they began targetting such peasants by only concentrating on tenancy reforms. The response of the poor and the landless was very lukewarm because their problem needed to be addressed separately. The communists did try this out during the Tebhaga and Telangana uprisings in the 1940s and with great measure of success but not without internal bickerings.

However, those Communists who were associated with these movements had to completely identify themselves with the cause of the rural poor so that they did not remain suspect in the eyes of the latter.

As we move on to the second chapter (1940–45), signs of strain begin to appear in the Left movement in general and the Communist movement in particular thus jeopardizing the existence of the United Front. Most communist breakaway groups were deeply anguished by the policy pursued by the Left within the Front as it was neither able to promote the cause of socialist revolution nor show the urgency of ousting the British from India. The CSP in particular drew more criticism because of its inability to move out of the Congress fold. The author suggests that the socialists failed to integrate the cause of social revolution with freedom struggle. This, he felt, could have been easily done by explaining to the peasants the intimate ties existing between the indigenous exploiting classes and imperialism. This would have served the dual purpose of raising the standard of both anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles.

It has been rightly pointed out that the CSP was torn between the ideas of social revolution and national independence and had deep faith in the Congress party for delivering both. Sahajanand Saraswati, a key figure in the Kisan Sabha movement, was also obsessed by a similar thought. He always lived with the hope of converting the Congress organization into a vehicle of national liberation and social transformation. However, he also made an attempt to provide a Left alternative to the Congress leadership and spared no effort to bring them together on an all India platform. But the socialists, on whose support he relied most, did not respond. At the Tripuri session of the Indian National Congress in 1939 he was completely bewildered by their conduct and openly admitted his failure in bringing together all the progressive forces. He also failed to understand the sudden volte-face on the part of socialists who were the first to support Subhash Chandra Bose's candidature for Congress presidentship and yet after he was elected president became his bitter critic. Sahajanand found all this so disgusting that he began moving toward communism because of the latter's greater commitment to the cause of socialist transformation. Hence, it was the issue of priorities that made Sahajanand gravitate toward the Communists. However, later the Swami also became disenchanted with them because of their continued stress on working class hegemony making him feel nostalgic about the Congress party. Thus his attempt to ensure Left solidarity could very well be taken either as an aberration or an effort to capture the Congress. Whichever way one looks at it, the fact remains that Sahajanand lived with this paradox through his entire life. His love for the Congress as an organization, which according to him was the only political body capable of spearheading India's struggle for independence, never waned and at the same time his faith in the Left parties in redeeming the lot of the kisans, also never ceased.

He thus wanted to combine the moderation of the Congress in political matters with the aggressiveness of the Kisan Sabha in social and economic spheres. His loyalties, therefore, always remained divided and he also fell victim to the same sort of allegations which he made against the socialists. The only difference was that while the socialists were organically tied to the Congress leadership, Sahajanand was emotionally hooked to the Congress organization.

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This could be illustrated by citing examples from the United Provinces and Bengal. In the former the CPI's official position of supporting British war efforts was not heeded by the party members who played a key role in the movement. Similarly, in the latter the Krishak Sabha of Mednipur district, like its parent organization, the AIKS, was opposed to the Quit India Movement but most of its followers were not willing to betray the general mood of the people.

As we approach the middle of the 20th century, the focus shifts to the role of CPI in the two extremely important peasant struggles, Tebhaga and Telangana (Chapter III). Here the author rightly questions Sugata Bose's argument that the Communists joined the Tebhaga movement in order to prove their credibility in the eyes of Comintern. On the contrary, we find that the Communists were into sustained work in the countryside much before the movement started. In Bengal during the famines in 1942 they carried out extensive relief work amongst the rural masses. Through their persistent attack on profiteers and hoarders they endeared themselves to the peasants. Earlier, they were engaged in mobilizing the rural poor in their fight against zamindari oppression. Ever since the formation of the Kisan Sabha in the thirties the Communists had been busy mobilizing the *bargadars* or share croppers in the north Bengal region. However, with the outbreak of the Second World War the party's strategy changed placing greater stress on imperialist war.

It is true that Communists for long had been toeing the line of the Comintern but there was always a vocal section within the party which was not willing to listen to the dictates of the central leadership. The question about reform and revolution was always intensely debated within the party. With the popular upsurge gaining momentum in the wake of government's economic policies during the Second World War it was no longer possible to avoid hard facts of economic life including soaring prices and forced grain levies. We find ample evidence to substantiate this argument. In Andhra Pradesh under the aegis of the Andhra Maha Sabha the Communists had been fighting the vicious system of *vetti* or forced labour in Nalgonda and Warrangal since 1940. During the crucial period, between 1942 and 1945, when it is generally believed that CPI's central committee in order to help the British in its war efforts against fascism suspended the idea of class struggle, one finds the Telangana communists waging a lone battle during these years, opposing the sanction of the central leadership against the landlords through peasant mobilization (p. 305).

Differences existed not only between the central and state leaderships but also within the states between those advocating drastic measures and others asking for moderate action shorn of violence. Hence, in Bengal, during Tebhaga agitations, forcible taking away of paddy and plough cattle from the jotedar's threshing floor, breaking of the granaries, were actions not approved by the state leadership but actively endorsed by the lower rung cadres. Similarly in Andhra Pradesh during the Telangana struggle forcible seizure of land and armed counter offensive against the razakars were not to the liking of top leadership of the state.

Coming to the tactical line adopted by the CPI regarding socialist transformation, it is suggested that the Communist messed up the issue by going in for wrong solutions (p. 463). This had a demoralizing effect on the peasant guerrillas of Telangana. The reason once again is attributed to the overbearing influence of the Comintern. The central leadership's stress on fighting both feudal and capitalist forms of exploitation as opposed to the Andhra Communist's emphasis on only pre-capitalist forms, led to the alienation of the rich and middle peasants which in turn weakened the Communist movement. One can only wish that the Indian Communists had taken the cue from Mao's experiences in China. His concept of agrarian reform was aimed at ending the feudal system which was represented by the landlords and old type of rich peasantry and not the liberal bourgeoisie represented by the enterprising landlords and rich peasants.

The empirical data could have done with more rigour. However, that does not take away the credit from the author of presenting a balanced and critical evaluation of the Left's role in various agrarian movements.

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Sexual Discipline and National Regeneration

Patricia Uberoi

SEX, CULTURE AND MODERNITY IN CHINA; MEDICAL SCIENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUAL IDENTITIES IN THE EARLY REPUBLICAN PERIOD

By Frank Dikötter

Hurst & Company, London, 1995, pp. viii+233, £ 19.50

Dikötter presents a quite extraordinary range of materials, from ponderous medical textbooks to popular self-help manuals, from serious scholarly writings to ephemera and trivia: the prim and pornographic, the weird and wonderful, the mundane and unremarkable. His bibliography lists some 350 primary sources in Chinese, and a couple of hundred secondary writings in other languages. One had simply no idea that such materials, particularly the ephemera, had survived the ravages of war and civil war, of political and cultural revolution.

It was not so long ago that the cultural history of the Republican era in China (1911–1949) was little more than an explanatory backdrop to account for and contextualize first the rise, and then the ultimate triumph, of the Chinese Communist Party through a period of imperialist pressure, warlordism, anti-Japanese resistance and civil war. This truly exemplary study demonstrates that there are other, quite fascinating, tales that can be told of this period, and that they have more than local significance.

According to Dikötter, who seems to have noticed something that other social historians of the period have missed, the Republican era was a period of both political and sexual revolution. The latter was not a revolution in the sense of sexual liberation or libertinism—though that must surely have been an aspect of the life-styles of traditional and emerging elites and of the bohemian sub-cultures of artists, writers and intellectuals in the Treaty Ports and metropoles. It was a sexual revolution in the sense that—aided by the explosion of vernacular language print culture—aspects of sexuality became a conspicuous focus of public discourse; that this discourse presented itself as a branch of modern knowledge, based in the natural sciences; and that individual sexual behaviour was linked in one way or another, explicitly or inexplicitly, with the task of nation-building. In a nutshell, as a sex education manual of the period disingenuously justified itself: 'To strengthen the country one should first strengthen the race; to strengthen the race one should first improve sex education.'

The Republican discourse on sex was not, it should be said, a coherent and integrated body of writings. On the contrary, as Dikötter observes in his Introduction, pronouncing on matters of sexuality was an activity widely dispersed through a burgeoning civil society.

The Republican discourse on sex was not, it should be said, a coherent and integrated body of writings. On the contrary, as Dikötter observes in his Introduction, pronouncing on matters of sexuality was an activity widely dispersed through a burgeoning civil society. It involved medical doctors, the emerging pharmaceutical industries and 'quack' sex specialists; intellectuals, journalists, public figures, moralists and social reformers; demographers, sociologists, psychologists, biologists, etc. It was a public discourse addressed to a disparate readership, from the medical student to the neo-literate man in the street. And it covered a very wide range of themes: gender roles and relations; procreation and birth control; sexual health and sexually transmitted disease; eugenics and racial purity; social evils and individual perversions; normal sexual response and psychosexual pathologies; the vulnerability and responsibilities of youth; and so on.

Several of these different themes and disparate bodies of writing have been individually addressed in various studies, many of them, in recent years, inspired by a feminist agenda. But their constitution as a coherent object of study greater than the sum of its separate parts is a methodological strategy with a rather different objective; namely, to outline what one might call (from within a different disciplinary tradition) the 'collective consciousness' of the era on questions of human sexuality.

To this end Dikötter presents a quite extraordinary range of materials, from ponderous medical textbooks to popular self-help manuals, from serious scholarly writings to ephemera and trivia: the prim and pornographic, the weird and wonderful, the mundane and unremarkable. His bibliography lists some 350 primary sources in Chinese, and a couple of hundred secondary writings in other languages. One had simply no idea that such materials, particularly the ephemera, had survived the ravages of war and civil war, of political and cultural revolution. (And one also wonders, parenthetically, whether any comparable cultural history could be written of South Asian sexualities, given the fact of linguistic fragmentation on the one hand, and very different attitudes to archive-keeping on the other.)

Fortunately for the reader, Dikötter wears all this learning very lightly indeed. Again fortunately for the reader, he seems almost naively content to be intelligible, despite operating within a Foucauldian framework. The result is a readable and workmanlike presentation of Chinese modernizing discourses on sexuality arranged under the five general themes of gender roles, sex and procreation, population control, sexually transmitted diseases, and 'youth' as a site of sexual anxiety—a chapter each. A brief introduction contextualises the study theoretically and methodologically, and with reference to the political history and cultural contours of the Republican period in China, while a neat Epilogue wraps it all up in the light of subsequent developments in the People's Republic. There is also a sprinkling of exotic (not to say 'kinky') illustrations from some of the texts he is examining: indeed, something for all tastes.

Dikötter believes that the essentializing categories of 'eastern' and 'western', 'traditional' and 'modern' that comprise the usual toolkit for interpreting the cultural history of modern China are inadequate for capturing the complexities of continuity and change, localism and globalism, in modern discourses on sex. China's 'traditional' culture was not unitary and unchanging, but plural and ever-evolving; supposedly 'modern' ideas were anticipated in intellectual developments in the late imperial period; 'western' ideas were very *selectively* appropriated; and the field of sexuality, as it was finally constituted as a body of modern knowledge, was not uniform and hegemonic but riven with ambiguity and contradiction.

For instance, gender hierarchy and the complementarity of male and female were foundational principles of Confucian cosmology and social thought, which modelled human social relations on the hierarchical complementarity of Heaven and Earth. Rejecting the Confucian scheme of things, an increasing number of people sought to ground and justify their understanding of gender roles and relations in the newly discovered 'truths' of modern science. Thus, the principle of the complementarity and inequality of the sexes was no longer supported by Confucian metaphysics but by the science of human biology, which had documented the different physical endowments of male and female bodies, which

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In its insistent valorization of individual self-control, the modern Chinese discussion of sexuality appears to have been peculiarly inflected by the specificities of Chinese culture even as it participated in a global discourse and drew on the ecumenical authority of modern science.

connected these physiological differences with psychological differences and predispositions, and which generalized to social relations at large the attributes of male 'activity' and female 'passivity' exemplified in the 'natural' activity of sexual intercourse. Similarly, appeal to modern science naturalized virginity as a condition of physical and moral purity, identified the conjugal relation as the proper site of satisfying sexual activity, and validated motherhood as woman's biological and social destiny.

The intersection of nationalism and sexuality is most conspicuous in debates on the themes of 'race' and of 'population'. The Republican period saw the introduction and popularization of the new sciences of Eugenics and Demography, although, as Dikötter shows, similar ideas had begun to emerge in the writings of the late imperial period.

Eugenic theories never received institutional support in Republican China, but they were widely dispersed through society and certainly laid the ground for current thinking and legislation in the PRC. Similarly, while there was no active government support for birth control (indeed, official Guomindang policy considered China's huge population an important national resource), support for measures of population limitation was widespread among educated classes, tempered only by the fear that the overall quality of the Chinese race would deteriorate if educated citizens practised birth control while the lesser orders bred without restraint. Notwithstanding such fundamental disagreements, however, the contradictory opinions on the necessity for birth control shared the common presumption that procreational activity belonged not merely to the private domain of conjugal relations, but was a crucial concern of the state.

The Republican period also saw the rise of a prolific and passionate discourse on sexual disease, linked to national survival and well-being. Venereal diseases were both an epidemiological reality in China at that time and, symbolically, an index of China's weakness in the face of imperialist aggression. 'Cultural representations of syphilis gave expression to the idea that China had been colonized by the dual force of foreign capital and fatal disease. Imperialists "violated" the country's territorial integrity, and germs "encroached" upon the urethra' (p. 130). There are interesting parallels in the current anxiety about China's 'spiritual' and physical pollution by new mores and diseases from the West.

The chief agent of the cancer of venereal disease infecting the body of Chinese society was the figure of the prostitute, whose clients then transmitted the disease to their innocent wives and children. Social reformers addressed themselves to eliminating the 'social evil' of prostitution for the good of the family and the nation, while social scientists reflected self-importantly on the genetic, psychological and environmental factors that predisposed certain women to this criminal expression of sexual deviance. The non-domestic and non-procreative practice of homosexuality was similarly stigmatized.

The Republican discourse on sex also witnessed the creation of a category of 'youth'. Adolescence was now recognized as a critical and vulnerable stage in the individual life-cycle, whose particular pathology was the wasteful and debilitating expenditure of energy in night emissions and masturbation—a loss as much to the nation as to the individual. As the sociologist Yi Jiayue put it, arguing for an anti-masturbation movement among youth: 'To predict the rise or fall of the nation one should look at the physique of the race; to assess the future of the state, it is enough to examine the bedclothes of our youth' (p. 165).

Successful passage through the physical, psychological and moral vicissitudes of adolescence was thought to be dependent both on the vigilant exercise of social control, and the development of self-discipline among youth. Indeed, the theme of *self*-control was a running thread through the Republican discourse on sexuality, simultaneously with the demand for enhanced social control and stern state intervention to improve the sexual health of the nation and rid it of sexual disorder and deviance.

In its insistent valorization of individual self-control, the modern Chinese discussion of sexuality appears to have been peculiarly inflected by the specificities of Chinese culture even as it participated in a global discourse and drew on the ecumenical authority of modern science. In *The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault had proposed that the essence of modernity lay in the imposition of 'discipline' over 'docile' human bodies, in contrast to the self-disciplinary and ascetic bodily regimes of medievalism. Modern discourses of the body in China, on the contrary, seemed to have laid great emphasis on self-discipline, even as they simultaneously endorsed state intervention. Again according to Foucault, the constitution of a modern domain of 'sexuality' endorsed the possibility of plural sexualities and sexual preferences, and severed sex-as-pleasure from sex-as-procreation. In modern China, the selective appropriation of scientific knowledge legitimated only heterogenital sex within the conjugal relation. The link between procreation and sexuality was reinscribed, and the pursuit of sex as pleasure stigmatized—all in the larger cause of social hygiene, racial improvement and effective nation-building.

The Republican discourse on sexuality was a product of civil society, but it prepared the ground, cognitively speaking, for the institution of PRC policies to monitor and control the sexual practices of the Chinese people—state-sponsored birth control, eugenic planning, the criminalization of sexual deviance, etc. At the same time, the severing of procreation from sex through the energetic propagation of birth control has dangerously opened the way to a legitimation of varieties of marital and extramarital sexual pleasure, despite continued moral exhortation in favour of adolescent self-restraint and conjugal fidelity. As China globalizes once again, as western values and life-styles captivate a new generation of Chinese youth, as AIDS replaces venereal disease as the stigmatized index of individual sexual indulgence and collective promiscuity, one is witness once again to a mounting public anxiety that China's 'spiritual culture' is about to succumb to the temptations of adulterous sexuality and the depravities of westernized modernity. It seems that China is all set, now, for another sexual revolution.

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* * *

As will be clear from this summary account, *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China* (like Dikötter's earlier and companion study, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* [Hurst, 1992)] provides much useful and fascinating material for the revision of received theories of sexual modernity, and for the comparative study of sexualities as well. Indian readers, especially, will find much that resonates in this material, particularly the emphasis on individual sexual self-discipline connected with national regeneration.

Rather sad, then, to reflect that among the many hundreds of references to primary and secondary writings on modern sexualities, there is perhaps only a single nod to South Asian materials—significantly, reference to the ubiquitous belief in the debilitating effects of semen loss, deployed as a reminder that such anxieties are current in many different cultures and historical eras.

One could take a bet that Indian (or Indianist) writings on modern sexualities are similarly insouciant of the Chinese experience. We, too, tend to look only to the West—and back again.

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Giving Voice to the Marginalized

Jasjit Purewal

RESEARCHING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN—METHODOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Martin D. Schwartz

Sage Publications, 1997, pp. 222, $19.95 (paperback)

Now and again a book appears which rekindles faith in scholarship and much more. Scholarship, which has the promise to feed groups loosely, clubbed as activists; social scientists and others involved in the thankless task of social change. Especially so when research on such issues continues to hover on the fringes of academia, beleaguered by ongoing debates on the 'respectability' of social research methodologies. Imagine when feminist issues get edited with such insight and that too on discomfiting issues of sexual violence. Martin D. Schwartz begins his preface by contextualizing the status quo—"we have witnessed two countervailing trends in research on rape, sexual harassment and other violence against women. First there was an enormous backlash movement throughout North America, with many men and a few women arguing that feminists have greatly exaggerated the problem. Much of the attack obscured the major issues in favour of petty complaints about the nature of scholarly research design. On the other hand the research and data has been increasing dramatically."

It is timely therefore to voice reassurance when a male scholar edits a book on researching sexual violence where the science is as thorough as the integrity with which the issues have been framed and addressed. I cannot even begin to overstate the reaffirmation that men writing on women can inspire. Especially when the subject is sexual not in term of sexuality (since many men have written tomes on their versions of female sexuality) but the ugly reality of sexual violence and its many faces. In doing so Schwartz has given a wholesome format to the debate by raising issues of backlash against research, incorporating the integral facet of emotions in researching this issue and finally issues of methodology, ethics, measurement scales and the hybrid problems of sample diversities in race, colour and cultural experiences.

It is in fact symptomatic of women's evolution in the past decade that the shell of secrecy around sexual appropriation of their bodies has been torn and which is now driving the issue onto the table if not at the centrestage of women's rights.

Anyone working on the issues of sexual violence knows only too well that it has been an uphill track to carve a place for sexual violence on the agenda, distinct from generic issues of violence against women. Since intimate reltionships, familial bonds and the whole nature of sexuality is where the violence is most often played out religion, culture and society has riddled the effort with complexities. It is in fact symptomatic of women's evolution in the past decade that the shell of secrecy around sexual appropriation of their bodies has been torn and which is now driving the issue onto the table if not at the centrestage of women's rights. It is also perhaps, the albeit begrudging, social acknowledgement that sexual abuse is a more pervasive and crippling truth in women's lives than what is convenient to believe.

"Why do we keep finding large numbers of victimized women, even in the face of a national media blitz arguing that these women could not possibly exist?" Koss and Hobart Cleveland, a professor and Ph.D. student explain in their chapter on date rape that it exists mainly because society does not censure it and in fact may encourage it. They provide one of the better summaries on current data available on date rape. By using longitudinal research they provide a new methodological tool which by using multiple measures over a long period neutralizes attacks that any one single question can confuse the respondent to change the direction of findings. DeKeseredy, sociology professor at Carleton University, in Chapter 3 uses a national sample survey of college and university and men and women to find widespread victimization of women in college campuses and his findings were challenged by the media which resulted in hate mail and threats.

In a unique study Christine Mattley of Ohio University argues that part of the continuum of sexual violence is the "pornography industry" which includes "telephone fantasy workers." In a path-breaking methodological innovation she got employed by a telephone sex service and took almost 2000 calls from clients. In the book she focuses on the emotions of the researcher. Her response to being stigmatized by her academic community, trivialized and made the butt of insults and jokes because she chose to work through a deviant group. "Meanwhile I was wrestling with my own feelings of alienation. I was having a tough time traversing two lives and never fitting in any place" she says of her emotions around the methodological choice she made. Jennifer Huff in her chapter raises the occupational hazards of her work. She was being sexually harassed by her research subjects which led to immense pressure through self-blame, worry and uncertainty about whether she should continue or abandon her project.

Susan Hippensteele looks at power, privilege and institutional change by recording how difficult it is to isolate racism from sexism and homophobia. A leader in the study of ethnoviolence she analyses the problem of simultaneously being both a committed activist and a careful research scientist. Another trendsetter, Claire Renzetti rose to fame with her best-known feminist participatory research in the U.S. on lesbian battery. Here she examines the advantages of her research method over standard positivist research for studying violence against women. The question of the gender of researchers on this very sensitive issue is raised by Dawn Currie and Brian Maclean, two of Canada's best known criminological researchers, assessing this question empirically conclude that training is more important than the gender of the researcher. This fact itself can revolutionize the resource base available for such research even as it cements the gender divide on a very fundamental and constructive point.

The book is one of the most refreshing yet erudite and comprehensive efforts on compiling research on sexual violence. It takes care to raise social bias and attitudes which actually fashion the victims perception of her experience.

Finally race and culture and the eternal problem of minorities being pushed to the fringe is taken up by Kimberley Husiman who raises the paradox that even as non-white researchers are the ones who are more often interested (especially in numbers) to take up non-white women's research how does that restrict their ability to get efficacious data. She acknowledges the barriers and complexities but underscores the importance of using this approach; "to increase global awareness and overcome cross-cultural barriers."

The book is one of the most refreshing yet erudite and comprehensive efforts on compiling research on sexual violence. It takes care to raise social bias and attitudes which actually fashion the victims perception of her experience. Martin Schwartz and Victoria Pitts underline in their chapter on "Self Blame in Hidden Rape Crisis" that; "although all of their samples was given love and support, the ones who were told that it was not their fault were the ones who reported the crime." For us in India the debate is still obfuscated by many of these issues and more. It would not be wrong to say that we are just beginning to call rape by its real and varied names. This book helps in illuminating the path yet to be tread but is also a heartening reaffirmation. On the on-going debate of the merits of feminist research Renzetti sums up eloquently for the merit of this research "to give voice to and improve life conditions of the marginalised even as it transforms social scientific inquiry from an academic exercise into an instrument of meaningful social change."

Jasjit Purewal, Director of Sakshi is an NGO working on violence against women with a special focus on sexual violence, was a journalist with the Indian Express *for many years and is the author of* Against Myself, *a translation of short stories by Rajee Seth.*

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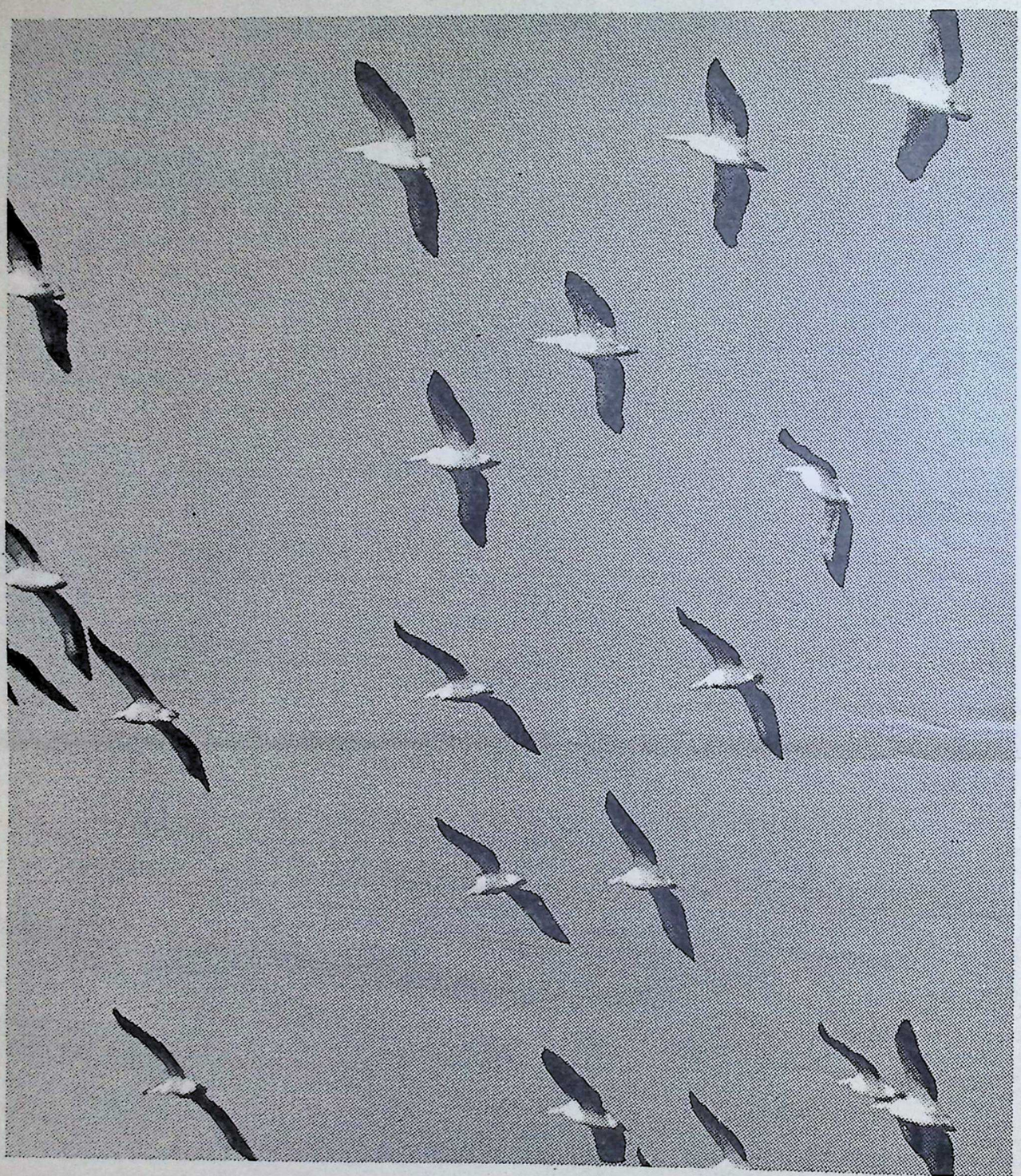

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Mirroring An Epoch

Margrit Pernau-Reifeld

ENSLAVED DAUGHTERS: COLONIALISM, LAW AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

By Sudhir Chandra

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. xi+249, Rs. 495.00

Sometimes it may happen that the world is reflected in a drop of water. Sometimes, it may happen that a small, at the first sight perhaps even trivial event reflects a whole epoch, the forces at work, the mentalities, their inherent contradictions and ambiguities. If such an event finds a historian who treats the details with loving care without ever losing sight of the bigger issues involved, the reader may indeed consider himself lucky.

The facts Sudhir Chandra presents in his new book are simple enough. Rukhmabai, a young woman of twenty-two years refuses to live with her husband. A child-bride at the age of eleven, she nevertheless remained with her mother and stepfather and was allowed to continue her education, which she did assiduously. Her husband, Dadaji, in the meanwhile went from bad to worse, refusing to get educated and to work and leading a dissipated life under the aegis of his uncle. When he finally claimed his bride, she refused to come and found support for her decision with her family. Social pressure having failed, in 1884 Dadaji filed a case for reconstitution of conjugal rights.

If there was anything exceptional in this case, it surely was the personality of Rukhmabai, the strength of character with which she faced the battle not only against her in-laws, but soon against the whole of the print media of Hindu orthodoxy as well. From the beginning she conceived her fight not only as for a personal cause—refusing to surrender to the embraces of a despised husband—but for the improvement of the lot of her Hindu sisters, whom she wanted to free from too early marriage performed without their consent. Once this fight had become public, she too received ample support from the liberal press, both in England and in India. So ample in fact was the support both Rukhmabai and Dadaji got from the opposing camps that they began to matter more as symbols, than as persons with a life of their own.

The process was lost in the first instance, the judge refusing to extend the applicability of the English law for "restitution" to cover an "institution" of conjugal rights as well. This decision however was reversed by the Bombay High Court, who ordered Rukhmabai to go "back" to the husband with whom she never had lived, or else to face imprisonment. Satyagrahi before the term was coined, she said she would rather take any punishment an unjust law might inflict upon her than to submit.

A seemingly private quarrel had become a political issue. Why was that so? Why did the passions rise so high on both sides in what were apparently only fine judicial points—whether the English law for restitution of conjugal rights covered the institution as well, and whether or not this law was applicable in the Indian context. Sudhir Chandra painstakingly sifts a vast amount of material, files of the judiciary, the media and the government. With the acumen of a scholar trained in analysing literary sources, he not only appreciates the judicial argumentation, but the process of thought, the mentalities which normally remain hidden behind the discussion of formal points.

Firstly: The differentiation between the restitution and the institution of conjugal rights, which came quite naturally to common feeling—that there should be a difference between a virgin bride refusing to consummate a marriage and an adult woman who had lived with her husband for several years—nevertheless raised thorny issues. Was sexual contact necessary for the legal validity of a Hindu marriage? If the marriage was considered complete only after consumation, what would be the consequence for the alimentation of the child widows? If moreover, like Rukhmabai and her supporters argued, consent was essential for Hindu marriage, the legality of most of the marriages would become open to doubt. Perhaps one should remember that it was far less, the simple requirement of registration for marriages, that provoked one of Gandhi's first satyagrahas in South Africa to gauge the intensity of popular feeling which might be raised on such an issue.

Secondly: What rights flow from a valid marriage? The English law viewed marriage as a contract in the fulfilment of which both partners acquired a legal right. Marriage according to Hindu law, however, was nearer to the sacrament than to the contract. Did this give the partners more or less rights? Which were these rights?

Thirdly: What was the nature of these rights, who was called upon to enforce them and by what means?

Traditionally, judgements in these cases seem to have pertained to the domain of the panchayat, who evaluated the facts and backed its sentence by spiritual pressure, such as sending a reluctant wife to hell after death or condemning her to be a worm for the next 10,000 years (p. 87 and p. 91). Nevertheless, a panchayat could certainly also order a social boycott—if it also sometimes delivered the wife bodily to her husband, remains ambiguous in Sudhir Chandra's exposition (p. 161).

However, the British had arrived by the 1880s and were quite decided that their government should include the administration of justice as well, even if they highly advertise the fact, that it was the colonial people's own personal law they applied. Where the English law, applied in its full, would have annulled Rukhmabai's marriage because of lack of consent; where the Hindu law could have proved more flexible and certainly did not provide for imprisonment, the administration of Hindu law by a British Court according to the English Civil Procedure Code decidedly gave her the worst of both systems. The solution Sudhir Chandra seems to favour would be a retreat of the State from a domain the panchayat handled far better. It certainly would be a very interesting point for a social historian to follow up (if he can find adequate source material), how the day-to-day administration of justice by the panchayats worked out, and how it did affect the position of the women. Leaving aside the single case of Rukhmabai, can a modern state really leave aside the control of the administration of justice in such an important part of social life? Would it really be in favour of women, if the state totally renounced to judicate and enforce his judgements in the private domain? To whom in that case would fall the control of social mechanisms which work against the weaker members of society? After all, it shouldn't be forgotten that in the 19th century it was the liberals in India, who were clamouring for the state to help them with social reforms, and the orthodox who resisted this intervention. The British on their part showed themselves reluctant to venture in changing the society they were ruling. Apparently they were still recovering from the shock of 1857 and for reason of imperial security forced to lean on the conserva-

The British had arrived by the 1880s and were quite decided that their government should include the administration of justice as well, even if they highly advertise the fact, that it was the colonial people's own personal law they applied. Where the English law, applied in its full, would have annulled Rukhmabai's marriage because of lack of consent; where the Hindu law could have proved more flexible and certainly did not provide for imprisonment, the administration of Hindu law by a British Court according to the English Civil Procedure Code decidedly gave her the worst of both systems.

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tive section of society. At the same time, as Thomas Metcalf has shown, the "creation of a difference"[1] permitted the colonial power at once to legitimate their rule by their supposed cultural superiority—not least shown by the way they treated women—and to uphold an orientalism contrary to all their proclaimed principles, but which was presumed to be what the ruled wanted and what fitted them best. This orientalism as well as the codified Anglo-Hindu Law were not, as upheld by the rulers, coming down from times immemorial, unchangeable and anchored in the Indian soul, but were a common creation of the British and a certain section of the Indian society, defined as representative by the colonial power. While quite willing to enact and change laws even in the face of considerable Indian resistance, if deemed necessary in the imperial interest, the British chose to make the position of women at the same time an example of how "their democratic ethos obliged them to tolerate the native law" (p. 132) and of how much better they would have liked to treat them, had they not been bound by, as they called it, native superstition.

In a final anti-climax, a financial agreement was reached outside the court, which left Dadaji free to remarry and Rukhmabai to pursue her study of medicine in England and afterwards to practise as a lady-doctor in Surat. The odium of having to force a young English-educated woman to prison being herewith removed from the colonial bureaucracy, the attempts of solving the judicial impasse by a very moderate legislative reform came to nought. The laws concerning the restitution of conjugal rights have been abolished in Great Britain only in the 1970s, in India they were confirmed by an interpretation of the Supreme Court in 1984 (p. 172 and 208).

Not every drop of water reflects the whole world. Sudhir Chandra's great merit lies both in having selected the right drop and in presenting it to the reader in such a way that he is brought to see the reflection and to reflect for himself.

[1] Metcalf, Thomas R. *Ideologies of the Raj* (The New Cambridge History of India, III. 4), Cambridge 1995.

Margrit Pernau-Reifeld has a doctorate from the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg on constitutional change and political culture in the princely state of Hyderabad in the 20th century. She is currently working on the Muslim community in Old Delhi in the 19th and 20th centuries.

A Chronological Survey

Sarvar V. Sherry Chand

FEMINISM: THEORY, CRITICISM, ANALYSIS

By Sushila Singh

Pencraft International, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 192, Rs. 300.00

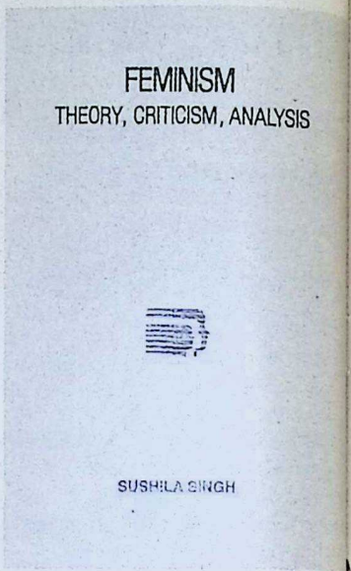
The announcements on the last few pages of the present volume would appear to indicate that Pencraft International have gone in for theory in a big way. Sushila Singh's book, *Feminism: Theory, Criticism, Analysis*, however, is a disappointing first taste of this enterprise—at least for the present reviewer.

The title of the book—rather, the sub-title—raises certain expectations which appear to receive some confirmation in the Preface, despite the somewhat imprecise phrasing of the sentence: "The book is organized around three approaches towards understanding feminism—theoretical tenets, literary criticism and applications." (Are these 'approaches'? one is inclined to ask. Is 'feminism' a discipline? What is being applied to what? Is feminism, then, a formula by which one solves problems—or reads texts?) Even so, one senses that the aim of the exercise may be to explore varieties of feminist theory with a view to explaining how these lead to various critical perspectives which are then illustrated with readings of particular texts. However, the next sentence should serve as a warning against any expectation of coherence or logical development of argument, let alone originality of conceptualization. "The chapters," we are told, "are based on previously published articles, invited lectures and updated conference presentations." This does appear to explain implicitly—but does it justify?—several instances of wholesale repetition, little or no rationale for the subject matter included, no logical development in the ordering of chapters, no reason for the selection of specific texts by specific writers. The second and third pages of the Preface (unnumbered) seem to assume that they are offering an explanation. But, in fact, being told that the "essentialist/constructionist debate has led to some of the greatest insights of the feminist theory" or that the chapter on "women's place in academia [in America from 1860 to 1900] discusses how women rejected conventional claims of female distinctiveness" or that "male writers like Norman Mailer exemplify marked misogyny" doesn't get the reader very far. What we have is a pretext for lumping together a heterogeneous collection of essays that also includes a summarized interview (the chapter on Margaret Drabble). It is not the heterogeneity of the pieces *per se* that is the problem, but the blithe assertion that they do in fact make a coherently argued book.

The mode in which the essays are written is predominantly survey (very often chronological survey) of available material interspersed with trite commentary revealing little insight or analysis.

Chapters 1 to 4 seem to cover what the subtitle calls 'theory' offering an elementary text-book account of the women's movement in the West, outlining certain themes and debates among feminist theorists. Chapter 3 draws somewhat unwelcome attention to itself on two counts. Pages 50–51 on Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are a verbatim repetition of chunks of Chapter 1. The two chapters could either have been clubbed together or had cross-referencing. Substantial use of the latter might have made the book a little neater. A more serious problem arises on pages 48–49 with Sushila Singh's account of Toril Moi's account of Hélène Cixous. Although the debt to Toril Moi is acknowledged and two sentences are placed within quotation marks, the rest is lifted from pages 121–122 of Moi's original (*Sexual/Textual Politics*, London, Methuen, 1988) almost *in toto* with a few words transposed, a few turns of phrase altered, or a few lines omitted. What is more, we are hard put to it to work out how this chunk relates to what goes before it or to what comes after. This may explain glaring dissonances of style which sometimes flows fluently but is often also muddled and ungrammatical especially in the use of articles.

Chapters 5 and 6 relate, similarly, to what the subtitle calls 'criticism'.



Chapter 7 on women's place in American academia in the second half of the 19th century seems to have no *raison d'être* at all. Chapter 8 on Elizabeth Cady Stanton seems to have been overlooked even by the chapter outline in the Preface. Having looked at this chapter, however, not to mention the twice-repeated attempted account of the nineteenth century women's rights movement, one is struck by the complete absence of any reference to or awareness of the chequered and extremely ambiguous relationship between the American women's rights movement and the contemporary abolitionist movement. Similarly, the book nowhere takes account of the links between patriarchal structures of oppression and other kinds of oppressive structures. We are left with a self-exculpatory gesture in the Preface: "This does not at all mean that feminism is race-neutral or class-neutral."

The ninth chapter is called 'The Frontier in American History and Masculinity'. This chapter, we are told in the Preface, offers a "consideration of the concept of masculinity" which "seems essential for a fuller understanding of the feminist philosophy". Unfortunately, the chapter is unable to tell us how or why. It boils down to a fairly trite assertion of the mutually reinforcing relationship between the American frontier experience and masculinist stereotypes which, we are told, ultimately resulted in the masculinist nature of the American Dream. Although the chapter is also peppered with quotes from and comments about masculinity in the Hindu Shastras (we fail to understand why) the only males who appear to have had anything to do with the frontier experi-

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ence are white—possibly because Sushila Singh has not come across books written on the subject which may have included other groups like the American Indians, for instance. One wonders what has become of their version of the "frontier" experience or "masculinity". Not that this seems to worry the author much.

Strangely enough, chapter 14 which seems to be a female counterpart of this one is not only located five chapters away, but is explicitly concerned with the 'frontier' experience of the women of a variety of ethnic groups—possibly because, this time, Sushila Singh's sources on the subject have been concerned with cultural plurality. This discrepancy between the two chapters, however, does not appear to have occurred to the author.

Sandwiched between these two chapters are the "applications"—chapters on Mailer, Margaret Drabble, Joyce Carol Oates and Margaret Atwood—all essentially in the images-of-women mode and largely devoted to retellings of the novels concerned, including repetitions in the two chapters (12 and 13) on Joyce Carol Oates.

Finally, the last chapter, we are told, "shows new dimensions of feminism in the context of the politics of the post-colonial culture, bringing out the historically material woman"—whatever that may mean! Surveys of bell hooks, Spivak and Sara Suleri rub shoulders with a generous sprinkling of names like Lyotard, Habermas, Appadurai, Clifford and Marcus, Audre Lorde etc., etc., but what they are doing there or what this chapter has to do with any other are questions which leave the reader guessing. Ultimately, it is as if the author herself has not understood the connections that she ought to be making, or is unable to say what she means.

This book conveys the over-all impression of a *khichdi* of name-dropping and a parade of 'erudition' substantiated by an impressive list of 'Works Cited', but very little else. It shows little evidence of intelligent assimilation or awareness of implications or ability to make connections. Added to this are frequent typographical or actual errors (Adrianne Rich, for instance in the epigraph to the Preface) and grammatical mistakes.

The book's simplistic survey nature may make it a useful means of exposure for beginners. But even this limited usefulness may be negated by its muddled writing, not to mention its price.

Sarvar V. Sherry Chand teaches in the Department of English, St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad.

Devotional Offering

R. Rajamani

TIRUPPAVAI—GODA'S GARLAND OF IMMORTAL HYMN

Translated from the Tamil by R. Bangaraswami.

Published by Kalai Arangam, Chennai

All the Tiruppavai hymns have the grace of poetry, the mood of mysticism, the sources of spiritualism and the most evocative descriptions of Nature as it was fifteen hundred years ago.

The fervour which marks the rendering of the thirty hymns composed by Andal (Goda Devi) in the month of Margasirsa (December–January) in many temples, discourses and households especially in South India, is captured in this devotional offering to the lay reader as well as to lovers of music. The lay reader has much to learn and gain from the introduction and commentary of Dr. Prema Nandakumar and the foreword by Vidwan U.Ve. Thirunagari Viraraghavachariar. The musical notations for rendering the hymns by late Gottuvadyam Vidwan Shri V.S. Parthasarathy Iyengar must be a veritable asset for music lovers and aspirants who would render the Tiruppavai in concerts. The illustrations gathered from Shri Srirama Bharati are teasing and pleasing.

The book has a lot to offer to non-Tamil knowing readers who may wish to delve more into Goda Devi's literary mysticism, thanks to the English translation of the verses by R. Bangaraswami and the commentary itself. There may be a few among the readers who may have found the passage easier without the occasional usage of uncommon words like askesis and anabasis, but it would be churlish to say that reaching out for the right dictionary in any way detracts from the efforts to reach the recesses of the soul and heart as portrayed in the twenty-third verse.

The book has a lot to offer to non- Tamil knowing readers who may wish to delve more into Goda Devi's literary mysticism, thanks to the English translation of the verses by R. Bangaraswami and the commentary itself.

All the Tiruppavai hymns have the grace of poetry, the mood of mysticism, the sources of spiritualism and the most evocative descriptions of Nature as it was fifteen hundred years ago. The total surrender to the Divine which Andal may have demonstrated by entering the Lord the same way as she came upon this Earth is brought as a voyage in these verses. This is a gentle voyage which takes us behind the footsteps of the gopikas (women devotees) towards Lord Krishna, as seen through the eyes of Andal and her companions in later day Srivilliputtur.

The first five verses are the beginning of the seeking with the *'vrata'* or the Margasirsa rites linked to the ancient observance of *'pavai nonbu'*; being shorn of descriptions of rituals and by linking the verses to imagery about the prosperity of the countryside, Andal prepares us for the noble journey ahead. Ten verses are then sung to wake up the gopikas from their slumber to take them to the Lord with the guidance of spiritual leaders. The next five verses are by the gopikas who are joined by Nappinnai (Nila Devi, the consort of the Lord) herself in the further three verses, all of them together now waking up the Lord Himself and singing his praise. Six verses follow, describing the Lord's feats and glory and the wonderful voyage ends in the *'phala sruthi'* which assures the devotees of the compassion of Lord Vishnu.

Very insightful comments of Sri Shribashyam Appalacharyulu (gleaned from the devoted translation of his Telugu discourses by the scholar Shri C. Sitaramamurthi) are skilfully woven into the interpretation of almost every verse by the commentator. These are of great value to those who may delve into *Tiruppavai* for its spiritual rather than lyrical splendour. To take us into another level of understanding of the mystic, Aurobindo's works have been cited, joining us to the call of the Divine now and then. The commentator excels herself often as in the fourteenth verse where she refers to *'prakriti'* (nature) as being charged with God-consciousness and the flora, fauna and humans in Gokulam are filled with Godliness. She makes us wonder where we have reached after fifteen hundred years, in which period man seems to have distanced himself not only from other living beings and things but the God-head itself! Another remarkable touch is in the twenty-third verse where she says no one knows what happens to us after we gain the vision of the Lord and quotes the pithy saying that those who have seen have not described and those who have described have not seen!

Not many mistakes or omissions are found in the text, though one felt that in the last paragraph of the commentary on the twenty-fourth verse, the reference to *'sevagam'* as praising 'greatness' seems to differ from the translation of the verse, which refers to being at His 'service'. The link between spiritualism and hedonism implicit in the description of the grease dripping from the elbows as we enjoy the rice-sweet *'kudarai pongal'* seems to have been missed out somewhat. In the twenty-ninth verse, the penumbral period between night and day as a period of vision is well annotated by the reference to Aurobindo's *Savitri*, but some inputs from the sage Ramanand, his very meaningful allusions to the state of sleep and state of consciousness might have been equally enlightening. But these are not shortcomings and are not intended to take away from the excellent and ennobling quality of the commentary itself, which rewards both the curious and the faithful. How one wishes national and global readership of such works could be promoted!

R. Rajamani, a retired civil servant, lives in Hyderabad.

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Stephen Greenblatt *in Conversation* with Manu Chakravarthy

Professor Stephen Greenblatt of Harvard University is Editor-in-Chief of the famous *Norton Shakespeare* as well as founder of the important New Historicist school of thought on cultural poetics. Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he has been awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Humanities Research Fellowship, the NEH Fellowship, the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, the Carnegie Fellowship, the Sterling Fellowship, the Robert Bates Fellowship, the NDAE Title IV Fellowship, the Wissenschaftskolleg Fellowship and a host of other honours.

Greenblatt's books include the trendsetting *Renaissance Self Fashioning* (1980), *Shakespearean Negotiation* (1988), and *Marvellous Possessions* (1991), Professor Greenblatt has been distinguished visiting Professor at virtually every major university in the US and several universities abroad.

Professor Greenblatt was in India in January and spoke to Manu Chakravarthy in Bangalore. We publish the excerpts of the conversation below.

Manu Chakravarthy: You are universally recognized as one of the chief architects of the School of New Historicism. At the present moment how would you place on record the exigencies that necessitated the new historicist method of reading literary texts?

Stephen Greenblatt: New Historicism came out of a very special Anglo-American historical situation and condition of literary criticism, which was that of reading works in isolation from their cultural, historical and social context. I was trained as a formalist critic. Actually I am very glad I was trained like that. That's the paradox I am placed in now. But by the late 1960s, for a variety of reasons, including a kind of lyrical fervent, it seemed wrong to try to isolate works of art from the world that produced and consumed them. And slightly in the late 60s, and increasingly in the 70s, I began to look for ways of integrating literary works with their context. There was already a tradition that did try and practise it, and that was Marxism. I was a student of Raymond Williams at Cambridge. I learnt a lot from Raymond Williams and I thought of myself in the late 60s and 70s as basically practising something very much like Marxist literary criticism. But then a number of different factors intervened. For one thing Marxist literary criticism in America at least had seemed to me to have reached a kind of a dead end. It had a very very limited set of appropriate contexts in its repertoire. And it was into, or so it seemed to me, a base super structure model that made it very difficult to understand a more complex and varied phenomenon. That was first. Secondly, Deconstruction, Structuralism and Post Structuralism came on the scene and made much more problematical the traditional stable form of Marxist criticism, from the 1950's let's say. And so New Historicism emerged initially as a kind of uneasy amalgam of Marxism and the incipient and nascent form of Post Structuralism. And when it basically took off on its own, it was an attempt to restore, without the dogmatic ideology of Marxism, and understand more deeply what it meant for literary works to come out of very specific historical times and places and at the same time be transmissible across centuries to people who lived in very different historical and cultural situations.

M.C.: A major attempt of New Historicism is to locate several contemporary crise in the historical past, by tracing them in texts that are built on historical material. Would you say the attempt to use texts to undertand many modern social, cultura and political problems has succeeded in shaping different approaches to studie in politics, history, literature and culture?

S.G.: I would say that whether we like it or not we have always been practising kind of allegorical way of looking at the past. There is no such thing as an innocen apprehension or a neutral apprehension of the past. We are interested in what w are, compelled by what we need to be interested in. It's a very difficult process. Yo can approach an antiquarian history, but you can never get all the way to it in it own terms. So in that sense New Historicism is not different from any historica approach in really being driven by these contemporary concerns, except that Ne Historicism tends to be more self conscious and articulate, self reflexive, abou doing so. I am actually very uneasy about what I would call excessive allegorizatio of not treating the past with enough respect as something other than ourselves, a something that cannot be moulded to our interests. So my interest is in creating a dialectical encounter between our own personal concerns and a past that resist and at the same time connects to what our concerns are.

M.C.: I raise this question to place in perspective your attempts to use a text lik *The Tempest* to highlight the disastrous experience of colonisation. You have don similar things with other Shakespearean texts too. In what precise terms are you attempts different from, let's say, Edward Said's method of using cultural an literary writing to uncover the agenda of colonial discourses as it emerges in tex like *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*?

S.G.: I have a great deal of respect for Edward Said's work, and admiration too. S my first response would be that there is a considerable amount of overlap betwee Said's work and mine. We are both influenced in very complicated ways b Foucault. I would say, however, that it probably would be said that I have a mor epistemological modesty than Edward Said, who has in some sense a mor political agenda—more passionate and engaged in that sense than I. I admire it bu it's not my political agenda and that's why I think in *Orientalism*, particularly Edward Said was unwilling to concede or to articulate the possibility of a revers movement. It's all about the Western misperception of the Orient. But did th Orient have an accurate perception of the West? Did they not have their ow mutually complacent fantasies? It seems to me that that refusal to acknowledge dialectical misapprehension was the consequence of a political programme tha Edward Said was at that moment passionately committed to. I admire and respec him for it but that would be the differentiation I would make between us. I also wa writing against colonialism. I don't think one has to take a neutral position and say, well there are two sides of the question. That's not what I am arguing. But I do think you are obliged to be, within your means, as accurate as you can possibly be in this case of mutual complexities working in the entire process.

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M.C.: Let me raise a question which extends the previous question. There is the argument that New Historicism has really not advanced the enterprise of decolonisation because it basically suspects historical writing, for history is too full of contradictions and one cannot be sure of it at all. In fact your rejection of Fredric Jameson and other Marxist historians comes from your disbelief in historical formulations because they are too contradictory and inconsistent. This is why the Marxist critics argue that you have pushed history into an intellectual arena and away from actual reality and thus reduced the scope of history itself. How would you answer this charge?

S.G.: I am to some extent guilty of this. I am not a politician, you see, Manu. I am not running for office. I am a literary historian and my attempt is to be honest, forthright and truthful as far as I can be. That's all I can claim.

But there are certain moments at which a kind of programme—political programme—intervenes with what you are trying to say. It might cloud your judgement too. So I have done the best I could have done with history. I believe in justice and I hate injustice. As far as possible, in my works, I have tried to be sensitive to the rights and wrongs of the historical situation that I am addressing. But I am not willing to abandon the historical truth in order to pursue a political programme. For example the *Norton Shakespeare* that I have edited, received a very violent attack in the Right Wing *London Times*. That's a Rupert Murdoch newspaper which is in the far Right now. They attacked the *Norton Shakespeare* for the triumph, as they said, of neo Marxism.

So, if for the point of view of certain critics on the Left, I am not far Left enough, from the point of view of critics of the Right I am violently to the Left. And I try to think why the *London Times* perceives me in the *Norton Shakespeare* as so far to the Left. Well, actually, I think Marxist critics are right that I am not so much to the Left, and I would say it's because at certain moments in the notes to the *Norton Shakespeare*, I call attention to, I think, rather, circumspectly and carefully, to certain things that are going on in the text when Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing* says that "I would marry her were she an Ethiope". I have a note which says "Ethiope"—therefore black and ugly, according to the Elizabethan racist stereotype. Now I think that's true.

But to call it a racist type is already too much for the Right Wing. I don't call Shakespeare a racist. Actually I don't think he was, but I do think that that's what is going on at that particular moment of the text and I was willing to say that and that's already going too far to the Left from the point of view of the cultural Right. And, of course, that piece of mine on *The Tempest* was attacked again in very violent terms in the *News Week* by a very influential columnist who said that this was more dangerous than Saddam Hussain. Can you imagine?

M.C.: There is also this argument, of Hayden White for instance, that the New Historicist method introduces a "culturalist fallacy", in that it introduces a kind of reductionism wherein broad social formations are reduced to the status of the function of a culture, and that there is a further reduction of a culture to the status of a text. Further, as the argument goes, large societal structures eventually get reduced to a mere text. How do you respond to this?

S.G.: Well, I want to know what the alternative is. It's probably true that there is a kind of textualism that New Historicism got from Clifford Geertz and others in the 1970s and to some extent from Foucault. But on the other hand, in the first place, I would call attention to the fact that New Historicism is vitally interested from the beginning in what distinguishes one kind of text from another, and so it's not all flattened down to a single kind of cultural text. We are highly interested in differentiations. In the second place I would say that my problem with Hayden White is that he has applied Formalism, Northrop Frye archetypal formalism to history as if there were no distinctions between fiction and truth in a way that New Historicism is not willing to do.

M.C.: But, you see, on the other hand the Marxists argue that the sense of history of New Historicism is one of fragmenting history into a series of uncoordinated episodes that encourage the belief that any single episode may be proclaimed to be fully representative of a whole historical period. Now is this really a valid statement as regards the strength of the sense of history of New Historicism, of taking up a single historical episode and seeing it as fully representative of a whole phase?

S.G.: No, no, its not accurate. But I understand the nature, I understand where the criticism you say is coming from. In the first place New Historicism most definitely doesn't have the old Marxist teleological faith in the idea that there is a progressive march in history. It was precisely that that we were breaking from. The charge of fragmentation, I would say, on the whole is inaccurate if fragmentation is set against a notion of a progressive march. I would even say that the events of the last decade suggest that the vision of a kind of progressive march, of the Marxist kind, was a lot of baloney. It simply has been manifested to be proven false. Now on the other hand, the charge that what is described by us is a much more fragmentary account is I think accurate, and it may be that New Historicism has a very difficult time coming up with a global theory including the theory of globalisation. The second thing that I would say is that, more interesting to me, the question of whether one small piece, what I call an anecdote, can adequately represent a whole. No, it can't. It can't for a very special reason, because the reason that anecdotes are interesting is that I found myself drawn to teasing out the implications of anecdotes, because it is a crisis in representation. The idea of representation itself is in crisis in the 20th century politically, sociologically and aesthetically and the anecdote as I have been using, and others too, is a kind of experimental testing ground, for the limits of representation not only attempts to imply a holistic kind of representation out of a tiny fragment.

M.C.: Let me turn closer to literary criticism. Now, for instance, a few critics argue that the insights of New Historicism are but what were available long ago, in somebody like Tillyard, and it is only a mechanical borrowing from Bakhtin, especially the "aestheticisation of disorder" relating to such carnivalist characters as Falstaff and others. This is also endorsed by the Marxist critics who call it old fashioned character criticism, which, they say, ignores the structure of the whole play. How would you react to such a position, of such a dismissal of your representation of characters?

S.G.: Well, I think it's probably just to say that in case of my own work my apprehension of larger structures is probably less significant, less powerful, than my apprehension of fragmentary situations. I wouldn't have said of characters but of fragmentary situations. I think it's probably true that as a criticism of my work it were just to say that I have difficulty settling for a grand over-arching account of the whole. But I would have said that was one of the reasons that my work doesn't much resemble Tillyard's, but, that it's actually much more, probably for ill or good, fragmentary, as well as much harsher and that I have lost faith in the idea of the whole in the sense, going back to your earlier question, there was a way in which I think my work is rather traditional, but I would have said that the genealogy, that the figure behind my work is Auerbach and not Tillyard. Let us say my work resembles the technique of Auerbach, of mimesis, of taking a small text or fragment and pushing and pushing and pushing until you begin to open up into a much larger social, historical whole. But I would say that Auerbach still believed—he wrote his great book in the 1940s—in the possibility of getting the whole and comprehending it all. And I have actually lost that much more scepticism about our capacity to get a glimpse of any large structure.

M.C.: I would also like you to respond to the view that New Historicism has an anachronistic method of reading literature, in that the attitudes and ideology of the twentieth century are projected backwards, that questions raised by New Historicism are actually questions that do not fit into the texts they examine. In fact Brian Vickers has this whole text, *Appropriating Shakespeare*, in which he goes to the extent of saying that in the Shakespearean plays the only enemies are the French and there are no colonies and the colonized. He asks, and I quote from Brian Vickers, "How can Greenblatt possibly use these texts to indict colonialism?" That's from *Appropriating Shakespeare*. What is your response to such an argument? By the way, I make it very clear that I think Brian Vickers is totally wrong.

S.G.: Brian Vickers! I don't think much of him. He begins his book with a quotation that in a way says it all. The quotation is from Shakespeare and it's from *The Tempest* . . ." But now I was the lord of this fair mansion". The implication of that quotation is that until recently he possessed this entire imagination and now he has lost it to upstarts, to Americans, outsiders, minorities, Jews, to people who are concerned about colonialism or gay lesbian theory or feminists. This is a book that is the expression, three hundred for four hundred pages, of some deep feeling of being displaced. That actually makes me very happy. I think it is good because I find this bully Englishman's position actually offensive and I also find it historically inaccurate. What does it mean to say that there is no colonization in *The Tempest? The Tempest* systematically uses a text that Shakespeare had clearly read from The East India Company. This point is not grasped that Shakespeare read a

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historical text and was calling from it. This is not my imposition on the Shakespearean text. This is, I think, a document of Shakespearean usage. Now Brian Vickers, and a number of other critics, have tried their hardest to push this aside, and by the way, I should say that my interest is not in attacking Shakespeare or his culture. I treat Shakespeare so remarkably, and we can tell a remarkably capacious and open mind. But he was a person of his times and he was interested in precisely what was going on in his time.

M.C.: I would like you to react to something of Brian Vickers in particular. This is his argument as a refutation of your position. He says, "I have argued elsewhere that Shakespeare calls in question the humanist belief that eloquence is the defining mark of a good man by making so many of his most persuasive talkers evil. Caliban, I suggest, is another challenge to the humanists' naive belief that the gift of speech is inherently civilizing. He is resistant to nurture, imperious to reason, a creature that can only be counted on to follow its own desires, however violent".... You can imagine my extreme reaction reading all these things. Now doesn't this actually project the racist angle of Brian Vickers?

S.G.: I guess I would say that it projects something that the play allows you to do. The play doesn't prohibit your doing what Brian Vickers does with it. I think the play allows that perspective just as *The Merchant of Venice* allows an antisemitic perspective, just as *The Taming of the Shrew* allows a violent misogynistic perspective. Nonetheless I will say that what's interesting about Shakespeare is what precisely eludes Vickers' grasp or comprehension. It's all a reading of only one side of the statements. Not that those statements are inaccurate. They are accurate. But, actually, what happens in the play is much more than that. But what we get in Vickers is a kind of a parody of the Shakespearean position without any grasp of what lies on the other side. Well, I think if Shakespeare actually were the figure that Vickers represents, he wouldn't be meaningful to us. Shakespeare indeed offers a lot more to us.

M.C.: Let me raise a specific question that has enormous implications as far as a society like India is concerned. Now it's obvious, and you too make it clear, that Foucault has had a great influence on New Historicism and you talk of the presence of Foucault all over Berkeley. So the unmasking of power structures is an important aspect of the readings of New Historicism. But there is the great indictment of Foucault that he was not at all interested in reforming or transforming power structures. In fact his study of power structures is seen by many as "only depressing". Actually in an interview—I don't know if you have watched this—between Chomsky and Foucault in 1971 it became pretty obvious that for Chomsky Foucault did not represent anything significant for there was no active resistance to power structures in Foucault. Given this position what role would you say New Historicism has to play in the actual existential reality, what we have been talking about of a country like India or other so called Third World countries?

S.G.: First of all I would question the accuracy of the judgement of Foucault. I would have said that Foucault probably didn't represent the kind of political opposition that Chomsky represented. No. That's true. Or for that matter, Foucault's position was different from what other Leftist organizations represented. But Foucault was interested in the possibility of resistance in other places—in places that haven't been thought about or looked at. So in some sense Foucault is, from this point of view—after 1989—and in some other ways a more interesting figure because he saw resistance occurring not in the big organized movements of the Left which, after all, is now in shambles. But he saw resistance occurring everywhere. In places that we would not actually think of. He saw power existing everywhere and I think actually that is least arguable, though it would take us more time to argue that out. But arguably it is a more interesting position than the position that in a way goes back to the big, mega conflicts between mega labour movements on the Left and business movements on the right. That's the first thing to say. As far as New Historicism politics is concerned, I guess I would say, though it may not be much of an offer, not much of a claim, that probably if you want to change Indian society literary criticism is not the principal way to try to do it. That it's probably a mistake to think that you are going to bring down a government by doing a better version of literary criticism. But that doesn't mean that you have to be quietist.

I do think that cultural symbols are immensely important in times of stress. I don't speak for India, but for myself I grew impatient with the idea that if you came up with a more radical interpretation of *Moby Dick* you are going to end the Vietnam War. That wasn't the way it was going to be ended. So my first respons would be that it, in a way, as one says it, is mixing apples and oranges and that Ne Historicism should have a political programme like a party. I mean it doesn't ha such a thing. On the other hand, having said that, and meaning it too, I would s that at certain moments, cultures mix up what I would call the "made up" and t "made real". Cultures renegotiate the boundaries between what you think "fictional" and what you actually get yourself and other people to believe is "real India, it seems to me, is in such a moment, a very heightened moment of r negotiating the boundary, a dangerous moment of re-negotiating the boundar between the "made up" and the "made real". There are certain things that see fictive but that other people are claiming as realities. Literary criticism is extreme sensitive to the processes by which people are made to believe in fiction as if th were truth or alternatively in which things that people have previously believe to be true are relegated to the position of fiction. And I think that we can addre that issue. We can sort out things "intelligible" and "intelligent" about t processes by which large groups of people are made to believe that something th is expected is actually real, and even possibly die for such beliefs.

M.C.: Your reference to any re-interpretation of *Moby Dick* not being able to end th Vietnam war is well taken. But I raise this question for only one reason and I sha try to make myself clear. Today much of this notion of Hinduism is built on a sing contruction, an imaginative construct, of our ancient traditions. When the BJ talks of Hinduism it almost seems to manufacture a certain kind of monolith notion of the Indian philosophical traditions. And, therefore, the Indian phil sophical traditions come, at least for those who have not been steeped in them a form that has to be taken for granted, leading to accept what the BJP has to s as to what constitutes Hindu tradition. Now I relate all this to your statement "Towards a Poetics of Culture". Let me read it out for you. "Theoretical satisfaction you write, "seems to depend upon a Utopian vision that collapses the contradictio of history into a moral imperative". And you maintain that this collapse is n accidental. You say, that "... this effacement of contradiction is not the consequen of an accidental lapse but rather the logical outcome of theory's search for obstac that blocks the realisation of its eschatological vision". Now when I transfer th statement to the Indian context what you have against theory is what we coul have against the BJP which tries to create, because of its own eschatological visio and its notion of finality as far as Indian culture is concerned, something that coul totally distort all these contradictions of history that are a part of the India philosophical traditions. So for us, literary criticism or a re-reading of the India philosophical texts would be more in terms of an actual "praxis", not a me intellectual opposition to "theory" as part of another theoretical formulation, bu a theory also forming a vital part of our "political praxis"....

S.G.: I am too ignorant to address the Indian situation. But I would say on principl that any complex religion that was worth paying attention to, or any comple philosophical tradition, because I am not sure Hinduism is a religion in any sens any complex belief system and tradition, is in fact made up out of not single an monolithic positions but out of long term contesting positions. And what happe in certain painful and stressful situations is that one group or another claims t have direct access to the truth of this tradition and produces a kind of prote parody for political purposes of what actually the tradition was worth in the fir place. Let's say one of the things that is painful about this whole political proce is that the religion itself or the tradition itself gets belittled. The Italian Christia Democratic Party makes a mockery of Christianity, the religious Right in Isra makes a mockery of Judaism. They reduce a very complex and rich thing to a kin of cartoon parody and I don't know if that applies to the Indian situation, I won speak of it because I don't know enough, but I do think that is frequently wh happens in situations of political stress. Manu, you are right in what you say. Le hope something good emerges out of all these for all of us.

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From Hai Bread! To Hybrid: An Essay in Evasion?

Tabish Khair

"But I, too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose."[1]

"The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation."[2]

There can hardly be a more appropriate way of starting a study of 'hybrid/ity' in Indian English literature than by quoting its most famous 'creative writer' and, by some accounts, its most well-known 'theorist'. I refer to Salman Rushdie and Homi K. Bhabha and the above quotes dealing with an area of concern common to both these incisive minds which has given us a newly-made term—'hybrid'—applied not only to Indian English literature but also, it increasingly appears, to India and Indians. It is in this context that the quotes and the term 'hybrid/ity' assume significance. Much of the use of 'hybrid' and 'hybridities' is, of course, based on the best of intentions. 'Hybrid', 'Cyborg' and 'Creol' are the result of, shall we say, the internalization of intersubjectivity. They mark a valid movement away from the perception of divided subjects to the perception of divisions within the (constructed) subject. However, the positioning of 'hybrid/ity' in the so-called 'postcolonial' discourse and its connections to the now unfashionable term 'alienation', whose place it has largely usurped, are extremely problematical.[3] While I have no desire to speak on behalf of postcolonial literatures—even granting the existence of this many-headed monster—I do wish to situate 'hybridity' within the discourse of 'multiculturality' from which it emerged and which, once again, it sidetracked and undermined in the one-headed context of Indian English literature.

A casual glance might identify a resemblance between 'hybridity' and 'alienation' and, therefore, arraign me for dilatory obfuscation. The current dictionary meaning of 'hybridity' is "subjection to cross-breeding, interbreed" as well as, in the case of hybrid, "offspring of two animals, etc.", "person of mixed nationality" and "thing/word composed of incongruous elements". These definitions appear to locate 'hybridity' in the site of possible alienation by assigning to the hybrid two or more possible identities. However, the matter is much more complex than the casual glance can detect—and in some ways the use of 'hybridity' is opposed to 'alienation' and, in effect if not intention, serves to occlude the existence of the latter. Here, I must point out that I do not wish to enter the larger discussion of whether we can speak of 'alienation' in the light of the dissolution of the integrated self and the universal subject so widely proclaimed (and unfairly appropriated) by postmodernism. My use of alienation is restricted to its social dimension, as denoting a split between the textualized and constituted subject and the society of its origin and/or location. It is this basic meaning of alienation—basic also in the sense that the first, Aristotle's, use of (the Greek equivalent of) 'alienation'[4] referred to the social aspect—which is relevant when one observes the relationships Anglophone/Eurocentric Indians have with India (and also implied in Franz Fanon's text *Black Skins, White Masks*'[5] in other postcolonial contexts). The hybrid—partly by giving a biological, organic intonation to the social issue of coming from different cultures or belonging to various cultures at the same time—conveniently occludes the intensity and, at times, the issue of alienation. 'Alienation' presumes a conflict, while hybridity assumes a conjoining, perhaps even an organic synthesis. This 'alienation' may or may not be a convenient or perhaps even an actual position for certain highly westernized intellectuals located in the West, but it is definitely the position of the majority of Indians who feel painfully split between two or more cultures. And then there is the issue of millions of other Indians who are not quite self-defined postcolonial 'hybrids' (beyond the sense that every subject and every nation or culture is a product of on-going hybridization) though they might be influenced by different cultures regarding aspects of their immediate material existence. As such, it is part of my contention that 'hybridity' as a theoretical position serves not just to obscure certain Indian and global realities but is, in itself, an attempt—determined or not—by highly-westernized Indian English academics and intellectuals to escape the negative connotations of being described as 'alienated'. For what they refer to as 'hybrid' is often the western-Indian *'babu sahab'* and almost never, for example, the Indian whose father is a Maharashtrian Hindu and mother a Bengali Muslim. In this context, it is necessary to highlight the two main 'advantages' of being a 'hybrid', rather than being 'alienated' (which need not be based on an essentialist conception of identity and may actually be seen in terms of the clash between constituting and socially-dominant discourses). Firstly, the 'hybrid' is always a familiar, self-congratulatory construct: the Maharashtrian Hindu/Bengali Muslim appears to be less 'hybrid' (or even 'not-hybrid') simply because that kind of hybridization is not privileged in post-colonial discourse or familiar to most westernized post-colonial theorists. Secondly, the notion of a 'hybrid'—where 'opposites' or separate entities meet and mesh to become 'one'—obscures the question of power. In fact, the degree to which the notion of power is obscured by most 'hybridity discourses' is evident from the very fact that only certain identities (such as the westernized 'post-colonial' one) are perceived as hybrids or 'more hybrid'. The question of power, on the other hand, is central to the concept of alienation with its constant stress on split and conflict.

The opposition between 'alienation' and 'hybridity' has been played out in various recent discourses, though seldom highlighted. One area where this opposition is often visible is Bakhtinian studies.

The opposition between 'alienation' and 'hybridity' has been played out in various recent discourses, though seldom highlighted. One area where this opposition is often visible is Bakhtinian studies. While we will refer to Bakhtin's (careful) use of 'hybridity' later on, at this phase of my analysis I wish to cast only a passing glance at the way 'hybridity', a word central to Bakhtin, has been implicitly or explicitly placed in opposition to 'alienation' by Bakhtin scholars.[6] Take for example the following extract from Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist's book: "...Bakhtin is utterly opposed to the Romantic longing for wholeness, that homesickness which produced the German vision of an ancient Greek *Gemeinschaft* from which all subsequent history has been a falling away, a second exile from Eden into a world of fatally split consciousness in self and alienation in society."[7] While justified as an observation on Bakhtin's thought, this sentence assumes a negative definition of 'alienation' and, implicitly, moves in the direction of a "merry science" of hybridity. There is one major problem with seeing 'alienation' in purely pejorative terms and forgetting that even in theology 'alienation' need not be a negative or even a potentially evanescent state: one is left to account for the improbability of dialogue without opposition (and the improbability of this opposition without alienation). An example of such a non-oppositional 'dialogue' is provided by Anita Desai in her novel *In Custody*. Here is how she describes a scene of much sound and fury: "It was obviously one that was repeated night after night, everyone spoke as if on cue, fluently, and there was a lack of spontaneity, a staleness. There was the Indian camp and the Pakistan camp, the pure-Persian camp and the demotic-Hindustani camp. They quarrelled and

[1] Salman Rushdie: *East, West* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), p. 211.

[2] Homi K. Bhabha: *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 2.

[3] For incisive discussions of this and related issues, refer to Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory* (London: Verso, 1992) or his essays in Mongia's *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996) and Sprinker's *Late Imperial Culture* (New York: Verso, 1995).

[4] Here I am avoiding a direct and extended use of Marx's theory of alienation (in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*) not because it is no longer relevant (it is!) but because it is too complex to be brought into the argument in this essay and because my argument does not call for a detailed explication of 'alienation'.

[5] Franz Fanon: *Black Skins, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

[6] Which is not surprising given the fact that 'alienation' is often seen as a Marxist term and a large number of Bakhtin scholars in the West are wondrously busy trying to wash the faintest 'taint' of Marxism off Bakhtin.

[7] Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist: *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 65.

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mocked and taunted and lost their tempers, but as if acting assigned roles. There was no evidence of anyone persecuting anyone else or of winning anyone over. . . The dialogue was as stale as the rice and gravy lying on tin trays all over the terrace."[8] Desai's scene is limited as an explanation. It has to be elaborated by examining the undue stress put by some Bakhtinians on the fact that (as Clark and Holquist put it only a couple of lines after the extract quoted earlier on) "the other is in the deepest sense my friend." What is missing from this image of the other as "my friend" is a recognition of the different spaces occupied by subjects ('self' or other/s). From one such space—existent in conquered and colonized states for example—the other may be effectively silenced in multiple ways. The other can only be the other if it opposes such 'silencing'. Only by imagining such an extreme (but quite common) scenario can one note the degree to which dialogue is oppositional. Unfortunately, not even the Bakhtinians' but also Bakhtin's other is, almost always, the communicative and social equal of the 'self'. Very little attention has been paid by Bakhtin and Bakhtinians to the phenomenon of the colonial or the racial (Black) Other, which has historically been something of a garbage bin for the (European) 'self'. In fact, if the Other was nothing but a 'friend', the Other would be the 'self'. It is impossible to imagine dialogue without opposition and conflict; and these factors presume the presence of 'alienation'. Alienation is or predates the point of departure, even when this departure is not physically enacted. In the Bakhtinian sense, too, we can talk of alienation as we talk of alterity. If there was no alienation, there would be no alterity and no dialogue. Let us assume a subject and another subject: what makes for alterity in this situation is the fact not just of communication but of disagreement, of conflict. This refusal to agree is both an index of alienation and can be seen as alienating the two subjects from one another (or from society/ies and discourses). In the absence of alienating factors and alienation, we will have no real dialogue. In fact, we will even have no alterity—just two sealed entities or one conjoined entity. However, it is a species of this conjoined entity that is implied by certain uses of the term 'hybrid/ity'. Here 'alienations'—as we shall see in the 'Indian English' context—have been safely digested, leaving us with a convenient 'hybrid'.

[8] Anita Desai: *In Custody* (Delhi: Penguin, 1994), p. 54.

We cannot approach 'hybrid/ity' without tracing the development of the term within the Indian English context. As a term, it has had a number of precursors and its logic has developed from colonial notions of Indian 'incomprehensibility' to the largely nationalist idea of Indian 'multiplicity', and from there to the particularly urban, westernized and anglophone, bourgeois/professional class condensation of the possible meanings of the word. This is a development that links 'hybridity' to earlier theories and tendencies, ranging from the semi-classical European discourse of 'Indian Wonders' to the fiction of Kipling and Forster. However, while noting the link, one has to stress the ways in which 'hybridity' marks a shift in the earlier discourse on India's 'mind-boggling diversity'. It is to this 'diversity' that the colonial emphasis on India's 'incomprehensibility' and 'immensity' and the nationalist discourse highlighting India's 'multiculturality' referred. That these discourses led to claims of hybridity is remarkable in view of the fact that 'hybrid/ity' suggests a blurring of borders that the earlier terms did not imply. The colonial attitude—perhaps only due to a tradition of Eurocentric binarism and the compulsions of practical governance—never confused its perception of India's diversity, size and even "irrationality" with the lack of boundaries, divisions and groups. That the boundaries and divisions the colonial mind imposed on India did not always coincide with existing lines of social, political or economic demarcation is another matter altogether. Similarly, the nationalist rhetoric portrayed India's 'multiplicity' as a congeries of differently-coloured and independently-shaped social groups. The stress was on the much-touted "unity in diversity", where the diversity was actual and palpable and the unity was mostly (but not completely) the creation of pan-nationalist and, at times, High Brahmanical discourse. The Indian national anthem with its confused and incomplete listing of separate linguistic, geographical and/or political units, its attempt to assemble a picture of India through such a listing of separate states and regions, is a living example of the nature of 'multiplicity' in the nationalist discourse. It is only with the coming of 'hybridity' in the last decade of the twentieth century that this separateness has been smelted into one organic unit, where the multiplicity of separate political, economic and social units in the political structure of 'one India' has been welded into a sort of 'psychological' in-betweenness that can be sited not in the material socio-historical conditions of the country or the group but in the individual. However, this is a long and significant process and needs to be traced in greater detail.

With the rise of Hindu reformism and Indian nationalism, this mode of perception becomes an affront to not only the Indian's perception of his past/s and culture/s but also a threat to his endeavour to construct a para-colonial identity and political reality.

To start with, one has to refer to early colonial writings. This writing, of which various examples are available ranging from Macaulay to recent Raj novels, shares some basic features of 'Orientalist' discourse as delineated and examined by Edward Said.[9] However, the specific feature of this discourse is the fact that it is based on a subdued, non-dialectical contrast between India as an (Orientalist) object of European discovery and knowledge and India as the object of non-comprehension. It is an echo of this latter element that reverberates through E.M. Forster's Malabar caves. This perception of India as inhumanly immense and incomprehensible is not only connected to the discourse of 'eastern mysticism' but also an extension of the Orientalist discourse which perceived the Oriental as irrational. In other words, the incomprehensibility of India is an extended socio-geographical crystallization of the irrationality of the Indian, a transference of the logic of this Orientalist sentiment from the psychological to the social, historical and geographical.

With the rise of Hindu reformism and Indian nationalism, this mode of perception becomes an affront to not only the Indian's perception of his past/s and culture/s but also a threat to his endeavour to construct a para-colonial identity and political reality. As such, there is a marked move towards multiplicity as a defence: the largely pejorative view of India's diversity as 'incomprehensible' or 'irrational' becomes the view of India's diversity as colourful and life-affirming. The nationalist claim of 'unity in diversity' is the formula for a multiplicity of units defined by belief in a real, historical or hypothetical Indian/ness. This formula, of course, has various dimensions. Sahir Ludhianvi's lyrics based on a popular devotional tune, *Ram-Rahim tero naam, sab ko sanmati dé bhagwaan* (*Ram and Rahim are both Your Name, Bestow well-being on all, O God*), was the application of this formula to the religious sphere. A Hindu God-name and an Islamic God-name were ascribed to the same Divinity and a prayer for collective well-being appended to this. Similar applications and adaptations of this formula took place in social, educational, political and other fields. The national anthem has already been dealt with. Nehru and Gandhi's writings also hinge around this formula. Much of popular culture—Bombay films about twins separated at birth and raised in Muslim and Hindu families, for example—incorporates and propagates this formula until the early 80s and, occasionally, in the early 90s. Major novels and stories, such as those of Prem Chand quite early on and those of Kamala Markandeya around and after Independence—reflect aspects of this nationalist 'multiplicity'. However, the fact to be noted is that this belief in 'multiplicity' does not dissolve boundaries and identities into one organic 'hybrid'. Gandhi's *bhajan* names the Hindu god and the Muslim god separately and suggests that both of them refer to the same (incomprehensible) Divinity. There is *no* attempt to merge the Hindu god and the Muslim god into one organic, unitary 'whole'. Gandhi himself—in his autobiographical *My Experiments With Truth*—balances celebrations of 'cultural openness and multiplicity' with a well demarcated 'Hindu' identity. This is also the attitude to the influence of the West on India and Indians, and not only in the writings of Gandhi or the more westernized Nehru (*Letters to My Daughter*). In the famous song of the fifties, *Mera joota hai Japani* (*My Shoes are Japanese*), the foreign presence is clearly demarcated and marked out to be adaptations or choices in the shape of items of clothing. The Indian is portrayed as wearing shoes made in Japan, trousers stitched in England and a red Russian cap, but his 'heart' remains Indian. In fact, one can take this reading further and claim that the song insists on the separateness and superficiality of the foreign presence, posited against the myth of an essential Indianness. Whatever the level of differentiation, the boundaries stay. One is aware of the fact that multiplicity can never be singular; though the ideal of 'unity in multiplicity' has to be pushed

[9] Edward Said: *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995).

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through. It is interesting to note that a landmark Indian English text from this period, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*,[10] itself attempts a 'combination' of the 'West' and India on clearly demarcated lines: supposedly 'Indian', "rush-and-tumble" sentence constructions combined with a conventional English vocabulary. Not for Rao the so-called 'hybridised' English ('Chamchofy', etc.) later to be concocted by Desani and Rushdie.

However, after the sixties the pressure of circumstances, largely in the form of a series of renewed communal and regional conflicts, did induce a slight shift in this rhetoric. Once again a popular song can be indicative:

Na hindu banega, na mussalmaan banega,
Insaan ki aulad hai, insaan banega. . .
(Not a Hindu will he be, nor will he be a Muslim;
The child of a human being, he will be human. . .)

Here the insistence on not becoming a Hindu or a Muslim is countered by the positive stress placed on becoming a 'human being'. This, however, is not so far from the nationalist formula as it appears to be. The 'human being' is merely a replacement for the 'Indian'. The human being is constructed not out of a complete repudiation of religion but, as the movie from which this song is taken indicates, of merely a curbing of the negative and violently antagonistic definitions of belonging to a particular religion. The human being is not even half Hindu and half Muslim; he is a humane Hindu or a humane Muslim. However, it might be this change in the nationalist rhetoric—in some ways part of a liberal rhetoric of universal humanism—which inadvertently points the way to the organic 'hybridity' of nineties literature and theory. In other words, this hybridity is based on a disillusionment of the prospects of attaining unity in diversity, if this diversity is not 'integrated'. The logic behind it was and is commonly aired by disillusioned secularists ("We are too religious"), nationalists ("We are too divided"), socialists ("We are too disorganised"), intellectuals ("The simplistic exoticism of multiculturalism") and others in India. The outcome of this disillusionment has been, on the reactionary side, the insistence on regionalisms and the Hindutva nationalism of the conservative BJP and, on the liberal side, the collapsing of all differences into an organic 'hybridity' and a privileging of this 'hybrid' subject.

However, even in the context of suggesting the 'universality' of differences (which are located even within the subject), the 'hybrid' contradicts itself by implying the existence of 'pure' and separate 'parents'. The 'hybrid' as a constituted subject is based on the notion of at least two universal, united subjects who parent it.

Thus, the 'hybrid' not only marks a contradiction in terms, it also brings an end to all political, dialectical and materialist discussions of multiculturality. Rushdie himself has used both multiculturality and (versions of) hybridity without, at times, realizing that they are different, even contradictory, terms. Of late, Rushdie's oeuvre has dovetailed completely into 'hybridity' partly due to the tragic affront of the so-called fatwa and partly due to the institutional and cultural siting of Rushdie's voice. Without even going back to his earlier *Midnight's Children*,[11] it is easy to trace how Rushdie's concept of hybridity/multiculturality has become increasingly aligned in the direction of a largely Eurocentric description of hybridity in his last three novels. The multiplicity of *The Satanic Verses*[12] is a more fertile and revolutionary concept than the anglophone hybridity of *The Moor's Last Sigh*.[13] While a type of hybridization rears its head in *The Satanic Verses* this is not the organic 'hybrid' of *The Moor's Last Sigh*; a fact evident in the slippages of and interchanges between Chumcha and Gibreel Farishta and the contradictory reports of the 'drowning' of Mirza Saeed's and Ayesha's village, among others. In his next book (skipping *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*), we have a statement on the condition of being 'multicultural' that can be called authorial speech in the Bakhtinian sense of the term:

> *"But I, too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose. I buck, I snort, I whinny, I rear, I kick. Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoes, lariats, I choose, neither of you and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose."*[14]

Even here, in comparison to *The Moor's Last Sigh*, there is a greater awareness of the exteriority of the hybridizing forces. The speaker , shall we say, 'hybridized' not just because he chooses, but also because he refuses to choose. The pressure of choice is exerted from the outside. There is no united, organic hybrid in the absence of the ropes which pull the constituted subject this way and that and which the subject partly resists and partly succumbs to. Of course, even here Rushdie's anglicized and privileged-class blind spots are evident: the refusal to choose is itself a choice, especially when it comes from a person whose physical site of articulation seems to have been determined by an inordinate pull on one of the ropes. By the time we come to *The Moor's Last Sigh* these blindspots have grown to a size where they prevent Rushdie from noticing the upper-middle class, anglophone nature of the 'hybridity' that he consciously sets out to champion. The 'hybridity' documented in this novel, as I have pointed out at some length in an article in the *London Magazine*,[15] is middle/upper class and anglophone. This is the colonial and 'post-colonial' hybridity which arose in a certain historical moment and which is mostly being championed at the expense of other pre-colonial 'hybridizations'. In one way, Aurora, the Moor himself and other 'hybrid' characters in *The Moor's Last Sigh* are the latest puppets of nostalgia in the stubborn saga of Empire/Raj literature; only the person pulling the strings this time is not an Englishman but a post- and-colonial, anglicized Indian.

This tendency of locating the hybrid not only as a particular bio-socio-cultural individual but also in a particular historical phase is even more pronounced in the influential writings of Homi K. Bhabha:

> *"The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation."*[16]

This is quite a mouthful as a statement, but what it actually means is that the 'post-colonial' (and postmodern) age is a moment of transformation which creates 'cultural hybridities'. This is even more evident (and the centrality of the 'colonial' heavily marked) when we consider other statements on the topic by Bhabha, such as: *"Hybridity is the sign of productivity of colonial power. . ."*[17] or *"Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation. . ."*[18] There are a number of problems with this formulation, in spite of the fact that it has become commonplace to see 'our age' as characterized by cultural hybridization. First of all, the placement of 'hybridity' in a particular historical moment undercuts the common, more general claim (even of hybridites) and perception that 'hybridization is the condition of existence and identity'. More problematically, this and similar statements lay bare the social positioning of this discourse on 'hybridity'. As in the case of Rushdie, it becomes evident that the hybridity being spoken of is related to the post-colonial situation and the 'East-West' connection. For one can argue that the current 'historical moment' is not just 'heterogenizing' but also 'homogenizing'. For example, historians like Mohan Singh Diwana[19] have noted that most Indian poets from the 13th to the 17th century wrote in three or more languages. This cannot be said of Rushdie or other Indian English novelists who might or might not speak another Indian language, but write only in English. Here, if a hybrid is defined as being polyglot, it can be said that Rushdie or Bhabha is less of a 'hybrid' than say the medieval Guru Nanak Dev who wrote in four languages. In fact, the association of 'hybridity' with only certain phases of history is deeply problematic; and 'historical hybridity' should be viewed keeping in mind the fact that the epitome of the 'hybrid' in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe was the Orang-utan, a newly discovered Ape that had become the focus of scientific and lay attention as 'half-human and half-animal'!

However, there are other—etymological and ontological—objections to the current 'post-colonial' use of 'hybridity'. As stated before, this use of the 'hybrid' implies the existence of two 'purities/unities' (non-hybrids), and as such does not solve the problem of the 'pure substance' or the 'unified and autonomous subject' anyway. This is more so because the 'hybrid' is formed in the same field as the 'unities/purities' it is supposed to counter. In using words based on 'hybrid', Bakhtin had probably been aware of this danger and had, as such, spoken of the novel as a hybrid of languages rather than suggesting that there was a particular hy-

[10] Raja Rao: *Kanthapura* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938).

[11] Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981)

[12] Salman Rushdie: *The Satanic Verses* (Dover, USA: The Consortium, 1992)

[13] Salman Rushdie: *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995)

[14] Rushdie: *East, West*, p. 211.

[15] Tabish Khair, "Elegy to an Empty Grave", *London Magazine*, 1996.

[16] Bhabha, p. 2.

[17] Bhabha, p. 112.

[18] Bhabha, p. 114.

[19] Mohan Singh Diwana, "Indian Socio-Linguistic Background", *Language and Society in India*, Proceedings of a Seminar (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1967).

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brid language[20] in the context of linguistics or a hybrid individual in the context of individuals,[21] or a hybrid novel in the context of (pure) novels.

No discussion of 'hybridity' can be concluded without a reference to M.M. Bakhtin, for Bakhtin is immediately responsible for the incorporation of the term 'hybrid' in the so-called post-colonial theoretical discourse even though he himself appeared to have been wary of using 'hybrid' and preferred 'hybridization' or 'hybridity'. However, there are various differences between Bakhtin's and current post-colonialists' use of the term. Bhabha, we have seen above, often implies that the hybrid is a product of a particular (our?) historical period/s. For Bakhtin,[22] however, hybridity is a condition of life: in the sense that any language *that is alive* is dialogical and what is dialogical can be seen as hybridized. One can infer that heteroglossia is the condition of survival of a language; pure monoglossia obtains only in dead languages.

As is implied above, Bakhtin's use of hybridity is, shall we say, dialogical. Hybridity operates by way of language in Bakhtin. But Bakhtin never calls a language the 'hybrid' of two or more languages. What he says is, for example, that two or more *languages* combine in active and heightened heteroglossia to create a hybrid *literary* form (the novel). Bakhtin seems to be aware that, non-biologically, hybridity can be used only in a cross-categorical context. It is this that protects him from the pitfalls into which even a highly erudite post-colonial thinker like Bhabha stumbles. There is an awareness in Bakhtin that two of the same sort cannot create a hybrid in the same category: they at best create a third of the same sort. The so-called hybrid, if it is created, has to belong to another category. The 'hybrid' is not the fusion of one unity with another unity, but a reordering of the elements that go in the construction of two or more presumed unities. This is evident even in Bakhtin's use of the term 'hybridization': *"The same hybridization, mixing of accents and erasing of boundaries between authorial speech and the speech of others is also present in other forms for transmitting characters' speech."*[23] Even here—where the active sense of 'hybridization' makes the notion of a 'hybrid' less dangerous and contradictory—Bakhtin distinguishes between the category of intra-novel speech (authorial speech and the speech of others in the novel) and the separate 'hybridized' category of extra- and inter-novel art and *forms* of transmitting the speech of characters.

This brings us to one final objection: the fact that 'hybridization' is not the same as 'hybrid'. Hybridization is an active, dialectical and/or dialogical term that connotes an on-going process, while 'the hybrid'—inspite of Bhabha's reiteration that it "is not a third term"—is a static description. The 'hybrid' is; it is not becoming. In this sense, the use of 'hybridization' is less problematic than the use of 'hybrid' or even of 'hybridity'.

We have noted earlier that 'hybrid' and 'hybridity'—like creol[24] or cyborg—mark a valid movement away from the perception of divided subjects to the perception of divisions within the constituted subject. Thus far the argument is genuine and needs to be respected. However, to return to the past, 'hybrid' is not such a new term in descriptions of India after all. India has historically been seen by Europeans as the land of 'hybrids'. At least from 500 BC downwards to the Renaissance, European writers and chroniclers—Lucian (based on Ctesias' descriptions), Pliny, Isidore of Seville, Julius Valerius, Brunetto Latini, Marco Polo, Sir John Mandeville and others—have populated India with 'hybrid' flora and fauna. The medieval 'Indian Wonders' cycle of legends and literature were based on such an idea of India—as a country of wonders, populated by harpies, unicorns, phoenixes, griffins and dragons, to name just a few 'hybrids'. These descriptions not only connect obliquely with later colonial descriptions of India's irrationality (mentioned earlier on), they also have two interesting features which should not be confused with their grotesque nature within Europe: 1) they are fabulous and fabled beings, reported as true from a distance, and 2) they are *European* hybrids. Harpies, unicorns and griffins do *not* exist in Indian cultural and mythical (classical or folk) traditions. No doubt, India has its own grotesque hybrids—ranging from the god Ganesh to certain folk tales of 'dynes', wolf-boys and 'yetis'—but it does not have harpies, unicorns, griffins or phoenixes. These are 'images' imposed on India from 'abroad': they highlight the 'reported' nature of the hybridity of India. Above all, they are a reminder of the hidden condition of 'power relations' in all such reports, of the fact that (as Edward Said would put it) no production of knowledge can ignore the author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances. It is this factor that should make us look again at the ideological siting of the made-anew, post-colonial or post-modern, discourse of 'hybridity'.

To sum up, the 'hybrid'—as we have seen—is not only a risky, contradictory, class-conditioned and Eurocentric concept in the context of Indian literature and life, it is also metaphorically a contradiction of the ethos of multiplicity that forms the solid breeding ground under the feet of 'hybridity'. This is further evident when we trace the 'hybrid' to its biological roots and realize that the hybrid is sterile. The hybrid cannot give birth to anything else, not even to its own likeness. This is too significant an implied contradiction to be dismissed as a 'play of meanings'. The sterility of 'hybrid' joins with its middle class and elitist location in Indian English life, and its reduction of differences to either a static unity or to 'essential' and unified 'parent subjectivities', to plot its own dissolution as a concept of multiplicity, o multi-culturalism, of diversity and o the profusion of differences. There ha earlier been (and still is) a perceptio that India could best be represented b the epithet 'Hai Bread!', a 'linguisti cally-hybrid' epithet that nevertheles underlined the depiction of India as th Other—a place of (non-European want, hunger, poverty and apathy. Th limitations of such a (at times, self- perception are reduced to insignificanc in the light of the entry of the post- colonial cultural 'Hybrid'—a nonsen sical beast, found mostly in the dens and powerful jungle-myths of Eurocentric, anglophone elite tha wishes to justify and legitimate its own existence and avoid facing its own internal and external contradictions.

[20]Which is not the same as noting the heteroglossia that envelopes *all* living languages.

[21]Which is not the same as saying that all identities are fluidly constituted and, as such, products of hybridization.

[22]M.M. Bakhtin, Translated by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson: *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, USA: University of Texas, 1996).

[23]Bakhtin, p. 320.

[24]I would like to note that 'creol' has certain advantages over the 'hybrid'. Firstly, 'creol' has to do with languages and, secondly, it suggests an on-going process. Creols, unlike mules, do not have one fixed and repeatable 'identity': their very nature suggests change, development, 'bastardization'.

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Rootedness of Indian Writing

Rita Kothari

THE ROLE OF TRADITION IN LITERATURE

By Sitakant Mahapatra

Vikas Publishing House, 1997, pp. 132, Rs. 195.00

Sitakant Mahapatra's book is an interesting account of how creative writers and artists through different ages and cultures negotiate their relationship with the past. The "Past" in Mahapatra's book is synonymous with tradition and tradition is synonymous with a pure repository of values handed down to us. (One disagrees with this very foundational assumption of the book. There is an elision of the role of the present—through institutionalization and the media, not to mention interested groups—in retaining, reviving, manipulating traditions.) Mahapatra sets out to examine the trend in art and literature of imbibing elements from great and little traditions. Literature mirrors our ambivalent relationship with the past as the past is both liberating and binding. In denying traditions we admit their persistence. Mahapatra illustrates this through artists as wide ranging as Kumaran Asan and Marquez.

The thirteen essays in his book are a study of the role "rootedness" in tradition has played in the creativity of writers such as Tagore, Paz, Marquez, Yeats A.K. Ramanujan, Nicholas Roerich and Kumaran Asan. Not all essays are on individual poets. The opening essay is on the *Mahabharata* and its relevance to our times. The *Mahabharata* has been a metanarrative for many an Indian. It has served as a metaphor for diverse emotional and political situations While the essay is a rich detailing of different interpretations of the Mahabharata by different authors Mahapatra assumes that it is a shared tradition for *all* Indians and has seamlessly helped shape our national ethos. The homogeneity in such an assumption is problematic considering the pluralistic nature of our society Secondly, Mahapatra forges a connection between the *Mahabharata* and present day reality by making oversimplified correspondence such as: "The

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Mahabharata is thus full of characters who have a relevance for our time. They are very contemporary. Even today we see a hunchbacked *kubja* speeding away on the streets of a metropolis in a cadillac" (p. 30).

In the essay on Tagore, Mahapatra tells us: "Tagore was the finest flower of India's Great Tradition and the 19th Century Indian Renaissance." (p. 70) He focuses upon the role of Upanishadic tradition in the making of Tagore's world-view. Tagore's vision combines the universal and the unique. The eulogy on Tagore would have had a deeper resonance had Mahapatra engaged with or at least acknowledged the recent demystification of the Tagore phenomenon in the postcolonial context, in which Tagore is often argued to have been complicit with the Orientalist project.

The essays on Kumaran Asan and Ramanujan offer interesting details of the lives of these poets. In his essay on Kumaran Asan, Mahapatra describes the village of Kayikera, Asan's birthplace with simplicity and fondness. The visual description of the felicitation function held in Kayikera by the sea recreates Asan's presence nostalgically while the sounds of the sea bring the present back to the shore. In the essay on Ramanujan, Mahapatra shows the process by which Ramanujan made forays into linguistics, anthropology, translation, poetry and changed the understanding of the "little" traditions. The last chapter titled "Redefining Indian Traditions(s)" is a comprehensive study of the co-existence of the *desi* and the *marga*, the classical and folk, indigenous and borrowed elements in the traditions of India. According to Mahapatra traditions in India have subsumed contradictory elements and still survived quite readily. Any methodological monism applied to an Indian tradition will go against its nature, even if it irons out the contradictions. Finally Mahapatra asks for a fresh evaluation of Indian traditions(s) keeping in mind their continuity and validity.

All along Mapapatra speaks of the fundamental good of tradition(s) for the general well being of society. This view would not be altogether unacceptable if the book had taken care of issues such as political subversion through tradition and perpetuation of some traditions at the cost of others. Not all books are politically radical, nor should that be one's expectation, but some amount of tentativeness and qualification would have redeemed the eulogistic aspect of this book.

Rita Kothari teaches in the Department of English, St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad.

The Old Order Changeth, Does It?

Sukrita Paul Kumar

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

By Giriraj Kishore. Translated from the original Hindi by Prajapati Sah.

Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, 1996, pp. 480, Rs. 200.00

The best thing *The Knight's Move* could do to me is to make me get to the original Hindi copy of Giriraj Kishore's novel *Dhai Ghar*. Covering an era of social and political strife and focussing on familial relationships, the narrative moves with felicity. The author makes no pretence at working out resolutions and reconciliations. The novel in Hindi is charged by a local ambience created through a language, a dialect full of metaphors and idioms of the region. All this lends authenticity to the experiences narrated. But going back to the English translation after a contact with the original, it is inevitable that I would now be more conscious of the "translation" aspect of the novel. Needless to say that such a culturally specific novel is a translator's challenge. Fiction written with a metropolitan and contemporary context is indeed easier to translate.

"My name is Bhaskar Rai, I am the last of the Rais of an old and well-to-do Rai family of western Uttar Pradesh. There'll be no more Rais after me". The opening of the novel *The Knight's Move*, is stark and effective, and the translation at this point is direct and faithful, retaining the force of the simplicity of both the style and the language of the original Hindi. At once one gets curious wanting to know the story of the Rais, the history of that specific family from western Uttar Pradesh. Why will there be no Rais any more? Maybe the last one does not have any children. But no, the next sentence informs us "There are of course, my children. . ." So then we are to get into the story of the decline of fiefdom, the diminishing of Zamindari, of in fact Raihood.

Giriraj Kishore, a well-known name from the Hindi fiction of contemporary times, captures poignant moments from the history of a social reality contextualized within a specific area of Uttar Pradesh. Apparently this is a history of focussing on social transformations knitted into political changes at the macro level. On the one hand a countrywide spread of the cry for freedom from the British and on the other an incorrigible sycophancy of a whole class of people, both the streams run parallel to each other.

Contextualized in the history of an age of transformation, the novel presents a variety of characters responding to the dynamics of the times. While one of them owns the Gandhian way existentially another one seeks freedom from familial demands.

Through the carefully worked out narrative Bade Rai, Majhhale Rai and Chotte Rai, each one of them acquires a distinctive shape and personality; with that, the individualistic identities, aspirations, uprisings begin to threaten the familial bonding within the Rai family. The backdrop of socio-political turbulence merges gradually with the main narrative. Norms and values of the old world cannot be taken for granted any more. There is a slow crumbling of the feudal structures of relationships within the family as much as outside it, and resulting from these disturbances the ground is prepared for the new social order, fresh political design and different equations in relationships within a family.

> "I felt this family had witnessed a battle of Plassey first when Majhhale Rai had made his declaration of independence by marrying the new Majjhale Chachi. It saw a second Plassey when he pulled apart the entire fabric of values that the Rai family had laboriously woven over a period of centuries by adopting an orphan. We were now on the threshold of a third Plassey. A call for independence had gone out. . ." (p. 296).

In the Translator's Preface, Prajapati Sah talks about how "exhilarating" translating *Dhai Ghar* had been for him. But one can well imagine the anguish and rigour gone into a translation demanding a difficult negotiation between two entirely different linguistic and cultural worlds. The sense of the "other culture" permeates perfectly and legitimately in the English translation with an effective usage of the original kinship terms and forms of address. It is upto the translator after all to stretch the scope of the target language and

create the possibility of accommodating another culture.

The end of the book carries a section called Notes and Glossary explaining Hindi terms used in the novel and providing comments on the mythological references. As an involved reader, I find it rather cumbersome to disengage myself from the narrative in the process of looking up a reference at the back of the book. On the other hand, not to have an access to the meaning of those terms would be frustrating for the reader. I find it much more acceptable and useful to have a short, perhaps a one-line explanation of the terms as a footnote in small print on the same page. A researcher or a scholar seeking more explanation needs to make efforts to get to the appropriate sources.

One wishes that before seeing the light of day the translated novel had been combed more finely to get rid of duplication of paragraphs here and there as well as spelling and typographical errors. For a smooth reading of the book, a clean text, conscientiously proof-read, is the least a reader demands of the publisher.

Giriraj Kishore's novel *The Knight's Move* tells the story of an epoch and has the grandeur of an epic like stature worthy of attention. The novel ends with "I, Bhaskar Rai, son of Hari Rai. . ." just as it began with "My name is Bhaskar Rai. . ." The two ends connect up with a long middle unfolding the tale of the best and the worst moments of the Rai family. The translator triumphs in making it available to the reader in English as an engaging novel.

Sukrita Paul Kumar teaches at Zakir Hussain College, Delhi University. She has a number of publications to her credit including a new collection of poetry entitled Folds of Silence (Kokil Publications, 1997)

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Of Books And Awards

Stephen Moss

Stephen Moss is Literary Editor of *The Guardian*. He was on the jury for the Commonwealth Writers Prize—Eurasia Region, 1998 which awarded the prize for the best book to Vikram Chandra for his *Love and Longing in Bombay*. This is the text of the speech he made at the British Council Conference on Commonwealth Writing.

We are happy to announce that from the next issue Stephen Moss will write a regular Letter from London on the latest books and trends in publishing exclusive to *The Book Review*.

It is a great privilege to be here in India participating in this event—and to be on the jury for the Eurasia section of the Commonwealth Prize. I am currently in the middle of judging three book awards. We completed our deliberations for the Whitbread Award for Best British Novel last month; and next month the judging process begins for the UK's premier Science Book Prize—an exciting undertaking at a time when literature is drawing increasing inspiration from the work of scientists and from the reflections of scientific thinkers such as Dawkins, Dennett, Gould and Hawking.

This period of exposure to book prize culture has left me a little weary—and perhaps a little wary too. The UK has many book prizes, some with the most bizarre criteria. I recently received a press release from Dundee City Council announcing a new prize of pounds 6,000 for a first novel. Fine, you might think, any award to assist new writing is worth while, but the rubric worried me: "To be given for a first novel set in the city of Dundee." This seemed me *reductio ad absurdum* of prize-giving: a case of commerce dictating art. No doubt Dundee would provide a rich tapestry for an aspiring novelist, but to impose such a straitjacket seemed ridiculous: ultimately of no help to the city or the writers.

There are those who would argue that all prizes are flawed. Did Dickens, or Hardy, or Austen, or Henry James need the encouragement of prizes, they ask rhetorically. There are those, too, who say that juries invariably favour the avowedly literary over the popular. This old chestnut re-appears every year when the Booker shortlist is announced. Who? Who? WHO? ask the would-be anti-elitists who wonder why blockbusters and sci-fit and best-selling genre fiction are routinely ignored.

It is important not to dismiss these arguments, for they do have some truth. Prize culture—as my Dundee example shows—can be counter-productive, inward-looking, self-reflexive, an exercise in mutual self-congratulation, an excuse for a black-tie dinner or a good party. And if the Booker and the other major prizes are unable properly to reflect the diversity of current writing and to embrace the now very broad audience for fiction, they inevitably lose their credibility.

I have argued elsewhere that last year the Booker was in danger of doing just that. The shortlist was widely rubbished and the event ignored by middle-market papers which would once have given it extensive coverage. The broadsheets covered it dutifully—but with no real enthusiasm. I had no sense of a public debate, even among the so-called chattering classes, about which book ought to win. In any case, it would have cost around pounds 100 to participate in that debate—because that would have been the price of buying all six books on the shortlist.

In *The Guardian*, I called for three things: panelists to be drawn from a wider age range and more diverse backgrounds; a less dismissive approach to so-called genre writing; and, most importnat, a clause in the rubric whereby all the shortlisted titles would immediately go into paperback under a joint imprint, perhaps with some of the proceeds going to an organization devoted to furthering literacy. I recalled Penguin doing precisely that in the early 1980s, with a marvellous list. I was broke at the time but managed to afford four of the books on the list, and thus had an opinion on—and a stake in—the final outcome. Bookshops were full; people were involved. It was a public event, not a private dinner.

Sadly, none of the suggestions has been taken up: the average age of this year's panel is around 60—so I don't expect any writers from the so-called "chemical generation" to be on the list; genre fiction will remain a poor relation; and publishers, doing very nicely with pounds 16 hardbacks or pounds 10 trade paperbacks, tell me my promotional scheme is crazy. Books are very buoyant at present in the UK. Fiction is "cool" among the twenty-and thirty-somethings. There is a new taste for very personal, confessional writing a la Nick Hornby; for tragi-comic soul-searching a la Bridget Jones; for grand narrative histories by generalist historians such as Simon Schama; for wide-ranging attempts to explain what we are and where we came from by scientists such as Richard Fortey. By contrast, literary prizes—especially those for fiction—appear becalmed, unable to tap the passion for books and evangelise in the way the Booker once attempted to.

UK fiction, too, seems unsure of itself. The death of the British novel is a rather hackneyed theme, but set against the power and imaginative range, the sheer ambition of the American novel, and the richness and strength of Commonwealth fiction, it would appear a suitable case for treatment.

It seems that Americans—Pynchon, Roth, DeLillo spring to mind—are currently writing the type of novels that Britons wrote in the mid-19th century—novels that mapped a country, tried to make sense of a culture, drew together the threads of past, present and future. By contrast, contemporary British wr ers—filled with post-modernis doubts about the "truth" of anythir obsessed by literary form, suspicio of moral assertion—appear mar nalised. With DeLillo, John Updike, Ja Smiley, Anne Tyler and Toni Morris all publishing novels in the UK in 19 it could be a year of very pointed so searching for the British novel.

Few of these strictures apply Commonwealth writing. Margar Atwood, Carol Shields, Anne Michae Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandr Rohinton Mistry, Peter Cary and ot ers have in recent years produced gl tering fictions whose range and pow are unquestioned. The Commonweal Prize, in the ten years of its existenc has been at the forefront of recognisi that achievement. Here, perhaps, it c teach the Booker Prize a thing or two. 1994, the prize for best book was right awarded to Vikram Seth, whose *Suitable Boy* failed even to make t shortlist for the Booker. In 1995 the ju recognized Louis de Bernieres's Capt Corelli's *Mandolin*, which again h passed the Booker by. In 1990 the be book prize was won by Mordec Richler, who has never been given h due by UK prize juries. Similarly, it h recognized fine books by Rohint Mistry, Anne-Marie MacDonald ar Earl Lovelace which received insuf cient attention in the UK.

If the question is ever posed, why we need a Commonwealth Prize wh the Booker embraces Commonweal writing, point to the Booker's erra record in recognising writers—an perhaps, to a certain cultural insulari inherent in the Booker process th seems to make it comfortable only wi a certain type of Commonwealth wr ing. The federal nature of the Co monwealth Prize also encourages delving into the nooks and crann that the more monolithic UK prizes f to penetrate.

My only criticism would conce the question of whether it should clude works in translation. For examp can writing in English truly reflect t range of literature in India, or the f extent of the Indian experience? Clear there are practical difficulties, but th ought to be some way in which t Commonwealth Prize can recogni writers writing in languages other th English. After all, the Commonwea thrives on a creative diversity, and gr fiction depends on particularity. Wh does not, I hasten to add, mean th look forward with bated breath to t Great Dundee Novel—written Gaelic.

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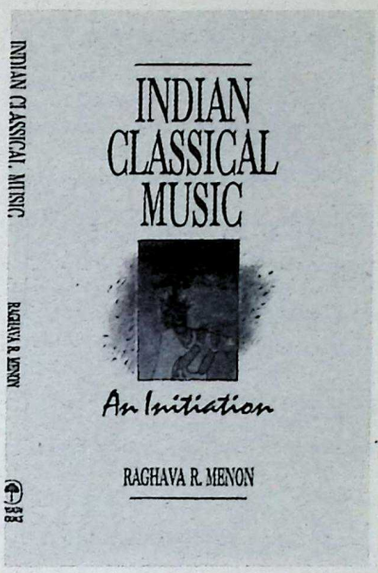
The Nature of Music

T.S. Parthasarathy

INDIAN CLASSIC MUSIC—AN INVITATION

By Raghava R. Menon

Vision Books, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 152, Rs. 95.00



There is a plethora of literature on Indian classical music dealing with both the practical and theoretical aspects of the art. Volumes have been written on the history of Indian music, lives of musicians and composers, 22 sruti-s and other technical aspects.

There is practically no literature on the nature of music, or how to discriminate between good music and bad. In 1976 Raghava R. Menon wrote his *The Sound of Indian Music* in which he had dealt with the nature and mystery of Indian music and its appreciation by readers. Written with great sensitivity and clarity, the book was intended to be useful to the professional, the amateur and the layman.

Menon holds two post-graduate degrees in mathematics and political science in addition to the Sangeet Prabhakar degree from the Allahabad University in Hindustani music. A man of many parts, he has been a visiting professor at Colgate and Copenhagen Universities and a widely travelled man of letters. He has been music critic in both eastern and western music for leading dailies. He is also the author of an authoritative biography of the immortal singer K.L. Saigal.

In a series of short articles the book takes the reader along the history of Indian music which, the author says, is "essentially a subjective stream of consciousness—deliciously inaccurate and mythical, full of nostalgia and received wisdom." He feels that the true history of Indian music lies within the raga and its changing faces through time.

The second chapter of the book deals with 'the Story of the Tanpura'. Intensive sadhana or practice is often put forth as a *sine qua non* for musicianship. But the author points out that unless the mind apprehends the swara and its myriad relationship in a raga, sadhana may remain merely a physical exercise. It is here that the Tanpura plays a vital role and helps the student through the crisis of learning. He avers that there is a mystic connection between this instrument and practice. Ustads like Faiyaz Khan used four Tanpuras, not without justification. It is not a mere drone and a Tanpura can only be understood by someone who has spent years in its company.

The raga is the unique feature of Indian classical music, both Hindustani and Carnatic and has no parallel in world music. The chapter on 'the Story of Raga' is not merely interesting but thought provoking. Tyagaraja described ragas as 'devatas' or divine forms. Mystery surrounds a raga, and every time a raga is sung, it wakes into life.

The fourth chapter deals with 'Composition and Architecture'. The Dhrupad is predominantly religious in character and its structure is more formal. The Khyal has gradually taken its place and occupies the major part of a modern concert. Dialects of Hindi like the Braja Bhasha are best suited for Khyals and add to the appeal of this composition.

In any Indian discipline, the guru of preceptor plays an important role and this is very pronounced in music. No gharana has any meaning without a Guru embodying it vitally. In Carnatic music, there is no gharana but what is called a 'Bani' which represents the style of a particular Guru. The author discusses the 'backdrop of the Guru' in great detail and stresses the importance of personal transmission of musical wisdom. In the next chapter he re-examines the role of the Guru in the light of modern developments and says that when Pandit Paluskar liberated the magical transmission of the oral tradition, music could be sold for a price and was made into a commodity. The living Guru disappeared from the scene.

Bhakti runs through music like a silver thread, particularly in Carnatic music. The author says that this is missing in the Khyals of Hindustani music.

In any Indian discipline, the guru or preceptor plays an impor-ant role and this is very pronounced in music. No gharana has any meaning without a guru embodying it vitally.

The seachange in the pattern of patronage to music has made a world of difference to the art and this is discussed in detail by the author in chapter 8. Native states provided a great measure of security to several giants who established gharanas. The All India Radio, which replaced the native states, had a profound impact on music. People could now hear the voices of great musicians through a wireless set. But the Radio brought a brand new discipline and music recitals became tighter in format.

The last and the longest chapter in the book is on the Sangeet Research Academy of Calcutta which began the practice of conducting an annual Sangeet Sammelan from 1971. The sponsors were the Indian Tobacco Company, a corporate giant. In 1978 the ITC established an institution called the Sangeet Research Academy which, little by little, became a Gurukula. It produced great singers like Ajoy Chakravarthy. Later Vijay Kichlu was discovered and was made head of the Academy. He made the Academy a closely-knit family in an emotionally rich and integrated environment.

In addition to Ajoy Chakravarthy, Rashid Khan became a star student of the Academy.

Menon has a fresh, racy style and the reader will be tempted to complete the book before putting it down. The glossary will be found highly useful by those who are not familiar with technical terms in music. The printing is elegant and the get up artistic.

T.S. Parthasarathy, fellow, Sangeet Natak Akademi and Secretary, Madras Music Academy, is a well-known musicologist and author of more than a dozen books on music and dance.

A Foray Into A 'Position of Excellence'

Jayeeta Sharma

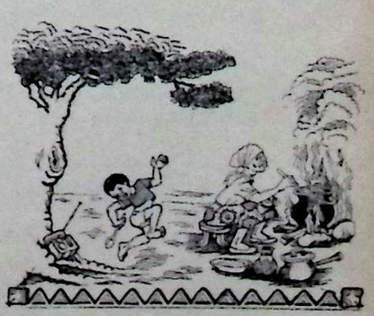
AFRICAN TALES FROM TENDAI'S GRANDMOTHER

By Lakshmi Mukundan

Tara Publishers, 1997, pp. 64, Rs. 70.00

This book comes as a worthy addition to the long tradition in which Just-So Stories would be one of the all-time exemplars, of using genres of folktale, animal fable and fireside stories to beguile and socialize the young. *African Tales* comprises stories from the Shona tribe of Zimbabwe dealing with the exploits of animals in their surrounding forests, as told to a small boy of the tribe by his grandmother. The clearly set out text as well as the black and white drawings, both from the versatile pen of Lakshmi Mukundan, form an enthralling whole for virtually any age-group of children. The child who has to be read aloud to can identify the baobab tree or grandmother's three-legged cooking pot and feel an active sense of participation in the exercise while older siblings would be devouring it on their own. Not to mention the accompanying parent who would surely be carried along with Tendai's counterparts in the excitement of discovering how the weaver birds reformed their layabout husbands or why the cheetah's claws are kept out as a badge of honour.

At the risk of sounding fulsome, one must assert that the most attractive part of this book, in addition to its many other virtues, is simply the production, excellent in every respect right down to



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the virtual absence of proofing errors, because this precisely is the area where one is constantly assailed by books which display exactly the reverse, no matter what might be their other merits. A striking instance of the care that has gone into *African Tales* is the use of handmade paper throughout, which not only reinforces, subtly, the narrator's subtext of harmony with the world of nature, but also conveys considerable aesthetic and tactile pleasure. An experience that is fairly infrequent in the shoddy works that many Indian publishers still seek to foist upon their child readers. The map of Africa that has been provided along with the illustrations of animals and Shona tribespeople are a praiseworthy attempt at conveying the kind of vibrancy and verisimilitude which any work seeking to both entertain and inform certainly owes its audience. Thankfully, Africa here is not treated as the usual never-never land of story safari where half-clad 'natives' of undifferentiated provenance were the only exposure children used to be given to their counterparts on that continent. These stories are precisely sited in Zimbabwe, with the Shona grandmother's tales very apposite to the context of the lives in the narrative. The intrusion of tourists and motorcars into their rural surroundings sparks off her tales of how, like Tendai, Young Impala and Young Crocodile too were having to cope with new sorts of people and experiences.

Buttressing the tales themselves, there is a wealth of incidental detail about the lives of the people in southern Africa, about the canning factory where Tendai's parents work, how it is the white farmer who owns both the factory and the land, how he and his grandmother sell handmade lace and wild mushrooms to passing motorists, how the meat they eat is now no longer hunted from the forest but arrives from the butcher's shop.

Buttressing the tales themselves, there is a wealth of incidental detail about the lives of the people in southern Africa, about the canning factory where Tendai's parents work, how it is the white farmer who owns both the factory and the land, how he and his grandmother sell handmade lace and wild mushrooms to passing motorists, how the meat they eat is now no longer hunted from the forest but arrives from the butcher's shop. This element of 'interest' in fact distinguishes this book from the two excellent volumes of African animal stories which the National Book Trust had published for India in 1993, originally brought out in New Zealand by David Bateman Ltd. Those stories, again an excellent addition to any child's library, were from different tribes and regions of the continent. While they provided us delightful 'beastly tales' and included, in addition, facts about each animal, some story detail there about the people of those areas could have enlivened matters further. The kind of insights given in such books not only serve as a 'fun' supplement to classroom themes but are a much needed antidote to stereotypes about Third World peoples which are all too prevalent otherwise, especially in older publications. And of course, for those of us who wish to widen our children's horizons further than English midnight feasts or American babysitters or their paler 'desi' clones, Mukundan and Tara Publishers will hopefully repeat their foray into what Mrs. Molesworth called "Positions of excellence", fairly soon.

Jayeeta Sharma teaches in Lady Sri Ram College, New Delhi.

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Communications

Dear Editor,

It was somewhat surprising to see a careful and humane scholar like Wagish Shukla declare that the Persian word *hindu* means "nigger". He also says that the term *hindu* came into use "when the invasions from central Asia othered the Indian population." (*The Book Review*, October 1997, p. 22).

Apart from the fact that there is no concept in Persian (or even Urdu) corresponding to the pejorative, inhuman concept underlying the English word nigger, another fact that we must remember is that *hindu* is a highly metaphorical expression in Persian. Since Wagish Shukla is not quite alone today in misunderstanding the connotations of the Persian word *hindu*, permit me to present its history and meaning in some detail.

The word is Arabic in origin: since at least the sixth century, Arabs have used *al-hind* to denote India, deriving the word from the name of the river, namely, *sindhu*. The sibilant 's' mutates to the aspirate 'h' in Arabic. The word-final *u* became mute, because in Arabic, the word-final vowel sound has semantic significance, and is governed by rules of grammar. That the sound wasn't entirely lost is shown by the fact that the Persian word for India is *hindustan*; other pronounciations of this word are *hindoostan* (the *oo* here represents the long *u* sound, as in the English *boot*), and *hindusan* (short *u*, as in the English *put*). When a noun or adjective in Persian takes the suffix—*stan* (signifying "place" or "land"), the vowel sound that joins the two is most often a short *I*, thus: *afghan-i-stan* (land of the Afghan); *gul-i-stan* (place of flowers); *reg-i-stan* (land of sand, hence, desert), and so on. In case of *hindustan*, however, the joining vowel sound *i* was not needed, because the vowel sound *u* was already there. Turkish, borrowing the word from Persian, follows the native Persian rule, and says *hindustan*. These pronunciations also testify to the fact that Arabic and Persian recognize the word-final *u* sound in *sindhu*.

In Arabic, *hindi* meant, and even now means, "a person or thing of Indian origin; a native of India". Also, *al-hind* came to signify "the Indians". In Persian, the word *hind* was taken from the Arabic, to mean "India". Since it was known to the Iranians that the Arabic *al-hind* possessed a word-final *u* in the original tongue, they distinguished one *hind* from another by saying *hind* for "India", and *hindu* for "Indian".

The earliest Persian dictionary that I know for certain to have entered *hindu* is *Dastur ul Afazil* (1342). It gives *hinduan* [plural of *hindu*] and glosses it as "the inhabitants of Hind; and the name of a city". Speaking of dictionaries, I am reminded of the fact that the third oldest known dictionary of Persian, called *Sihah ul Furs* (1328) was composed by an Indian scholar called Muhammad bin Hindu Shah Nakhjuani. Had the word *hindu* been a pejorative, no one would ever have been called "Hindu Shah". (This also suggests that the occasional use, as we shall see below, of *hindu* to mean "thief/robber/slave" was a "literary", rather than everyday usage).

Persian is the most metaphorical of the languages that I know of. One of the reasons for this is the tendency of Persian speakers to think syntagmatically. Consider the following:

Since "hindu" means "Indian", and Indians are dark complexioned, and since most slaves were dark complexioned because they came from African countries, "hindu" came to mean "slave" (1).

Since darkness of complexion was an attribute of beauty, "hindu" came also to mean "beautiful person" or "beloved" (2).

Since "hindu" means "beloved", and beloveds are supposed to steal people's hearts, nor oblige people to give up their heart, the beloved began to be called a thief, or a robber; and since the word "hindu" also means "beloved", so it also acquired the meaning of "thief/robber" (3).

Since the beauty spot on the beloved's face is black, and Indians also are of dark colour, so "hindu" came to mean "beauty spot on the face" (4).

Since the beauty spot is believed to protect the beloved from the evil eye, "hindu" came to signify "watchman" (5).

Since Indian steel, especially swords, were world famous, and since "hindu" meant "Indian", it also took on the meaning of "sword" (6).

By transference, "hindu = sword", became "hindu = wielder of the sword, soldier" (7).

Since thieves and robbers operated mostly by night, and also often painted their faces black, or wore black masks, and Indians are dark of complexion, "hindu" came to mean "thief" or "robber" (8).

Since "beloved = thief, robber", and "hindu = thief, robber", so "hindu = beloved" (9).

Since lovers are apt to forsake conventional religion and respectability for the sake of the beloved, both lover and beloved are seen as "kafir" or "denier (of God), infidel"; and Indians are, by convention, unbelievers, so "hindu" came to denote "infidel", and also, "beloved" (10).

I cannot say that the above series exhausts all the meanings of the Persian word *hindu*: it does not in any case indicate the order in which the meanings arose in the language. I am not aware of any classical dictionary of Persian which defines *hindu* as "an adherent of the religion called Hinduism". Wagish Shukla himself cites the vast and authoritative *Farhang-e Anand Raj*, composed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century at Varanasi, and published in three volumes by Naval Kishor at Lucknow during 1889–94, to say that *hindu* means "inhabitant of India."

Wagish Shukla says that Khan-e Arzu (1689–1756) held that since "Hindu" is a special community, all inhabitants of India should not be called *hindu*: in the general sense, Indians should be called *hindi*, the appellative *hindu* being reserved for the adherents of the Hindu religion alone. It is true that Tek Chand Bahar, in his monumental Persian dictionary *Bahar-e Ajam* (1752), quotes Khan-e Arzu to the above effect. But Bahar himself seems to regard Khan-e Arzu's view as merely *ad hominem*, he makes no comment upon it, nor does he amend his own definition of *hindu* to agree with Khan-e Arzu's contention. No classical Persian lexicographer seems to have followed Khan-e Arzu in this position. Even Steingass, who is rather liberal in adducing definitions, has just this to say in his definition of *hindu*: "An Indian; black; a sevant; a robber; an infidel; a watchman; a mole on the cheek of a mistress".

Wagish Shukla says that Khan-e Arzu "is the one who othered Persian-laden Urdu from Hindavi (the language of the Hindus)..." (p. 23). In describing Hindavi as the language of the Hindus, Shukla has, as we shall see in a moment, let himself be caught in Gilchrist's trap. As regards Khan-e Arzu, he did no such thing as "othering Persian-laden urdu". On the contrary, he was the first, and long before William Jones, to point out similarities between Sanskrit and Persian, suggesting a common origin for both. Khan-e Arzu was a linguist of extraordinary range and perception, and a Persianist. Apart from being friend and informal occasional adviser to a number of Urdu poets in Delhi, he had very little to do with Urdu (or Hindi, or Rekhta, as the language was then called).

As for "Persian-laden Urdu", there was no such thing in Khan-e Arzu's time. People whom history identifies as writing "Persian-laden Urdu" came a century and more later: typical examples are, much less than half of Ghalib's verse and prose, and about half of Abul Kalam Azad's prose.

Finally, I can't find myself in sympathy with Wagish Shukla's query, "Why should we not say that the Hindi-Urdu divide was created by, say, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who insisted that the Urdu language and the Perso-Arabic script were the 'identity' of Muslims?" (p. 23). Dr Shukla overlooks the fact the foundation of the Urdu-Hindi divide was laid at the College of Fort William, when Syed Ahmad Khan (1857–1898) wasn't even born. All of us should benefit from reading Tara Chand on this subject. I refer particularly to his *The Problem of Hindustani* (Allahabad, 1944). Also of great value is *Hindustani*, a small booklet in Urdu, consisting of the text of sppeches on the subject commissioned and broadcast by the All India Radio, New Delhi, from February 20, 1939, to February 25, 1939. In addition to Tara Chand, the speeches of Brijmohan Dattatreya Kaifi and Dr Rajendra Prasad are particularly interesting, describing as they do the historical background of the problem, and the political perspective of the thirties. The book was published by Maktaba Jamia, New Delhi, shortly after the talks were broadcast.

Nearer our time are the writings of Francis Robinson: *Separatism Among the Indian Muslims* (Cambridge, 1974), and Christopher King: *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India* OUP., Bombay, 1994). I would, however, like to go to the very source, and quote from John Gilchrist whom all of us know as the driving energy behind the teching of Urdu and Hindi at Fort William. In 1788, Gilchrist wrote a book called *The Oriental Linguist, An Easy and Familiar Introduction to The Hindoostanee, Or Grand Popular Language of Hindoostan (Vulgarly, But Improperly, Called The Moors)*. A second edition, "revised and altered", followed in 1802 (Calcutta, Printed by P. Ferris, at the Post Press). This is the edition that I have before me, and I quote from page i of the Introduction (italics as in the original, underlining emphasis mine):

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"I may proceed to state-Hindoostan is a compound word, equivalent to *Hindoo*-land, or *Negro*-land, and too well known to require any description here. It is inhabited chiefly by Hindoos and Moosulmans; whom we may safely comprise, as well as their language, under the general, conciliating, comprehensive term of Hindoostanee, and which I have adopted for the above and following reasons.

"This name of the country being modern, as well as the vernacular tongue in question, no other appeared so appropriate, as it did to me, when I first engaged in the study and cultivation of the language. That the natives and others call it also *Hindee*, Indian, from *Hind*, the ancient appellation of India, cannot be denied; but as this is apt to be confounded with *Hinduwee, Hindoo, ee, Hindvee*, the derivative from *Hindoo*, I adhere to my general opinion, that we should invariably discard all other denominations of the popular speech of this country, including the unmeaning word *Moors*, and substitute for them Hindoostanee, whether the people here constantly do so or not: as they can hardly discriminate sufficiently, to observe the use and propriety of such restrictions, even when pointed out to them.

"*Hinduwee*, I have treated as the exclusive property of the Hindoos alone; and have therefore constantly applied it to the old language of India, which prevailed before the Moosulman invasion; and in fact now constitutes among them, the basis or groundwork of the *Hindoostanee*, a comparatively recent superstructure, composed of Arabic and Persian, in which the two last may be considered in the same relation, that Latin and French bear to English: while we may justly treat the *Hinduwee* of the modern speech or Hindoostanee, as the Saxon of the former, thus:

SAXON.
LATIN.
FRENCH.
ENGLISH.
HINDUWEE.
ARABIC.
PERSIAN.
HINDOOSTANEE."

I quote Gilchrist at such length so as to bring out his argument in its entirety, and also to reassure your readers that I am not misrepresenting Gilchrist by compressing his text.

Apart from the absurdity of the historical philology equating "Hinduwee" with Saxon, and assigning the same place to Arabic and Persian in relation to "Hindoostanee" which Latin and French putatively occupy in relation to English, two things stand out: Gilchrist's naive but imperialistic arrogance in appropriating for himself the role of lawgiver and mentor to the natives, who don't know what is good for themselves, and his anxiety to deny to Urdu (then almost universally called Hindi, as Gilchrist himself testifies), its place as the premier language of the Indian people, and confine it to the Muslims alone. Having himself said that there is but one language spoken by both Hindus and Muslims, and that "the natives and others" call it "Hindi", and that "Hinduwee" is "the exclusive property of the Hindoos alone". Poor Gilchrist would have been quite unhappy, though perhaps not abashed, to learn that the Urdu poet Mushafi (1750–1824) wrote in his third Divan, compiled around 1785:

Mushafi, put away Persian,
Now the vogue is for Hinduvi verse.

So much for "Hinduwee" being the "exclusive property" of the Muslims. In an earlier work, Gilchrist had already attested the all India character of "Hindi", which he named "Hindoostanee", but which had also, by that time, begun to be called "Urdu". In his *A Grammar of The Hindoostanee Language, Or Part Third of Volume First, Of A System Of Hindoostanee Philology* (Calcutta, 1796, at the Chronicle Press), he devoted Chapter 9 to Prosody, and said that he would illustrate his argument by quoting "a few specimens from various sorts of verse used by the best poets, who have composed their several works in that mixed Dialect, also called OOrdoo" or the polished language of the Court, and which even at this day pervades the vast provinces of a once powerful empire" (p. 261).

I don't think I need to say much more now. The fact that most of us—even Urdu scholars—constantly put out of our minds is the peculiarity of nomenclature: Writing around 1220, Muhammad Aufi said that Masud Sa'd Salman (1046–1126) composed a whole Divan in *hind(u)vi*. Khusrau, writing in 1294, spoke of Masud Sa'd Salman's *hindi* or *hind (u) vi* Divan (the extant mss seem to exchange one freely for the other). He himself, he says, has composed, for the delectation of his friends, "a few quires' worth of poems" in *hindi*. In 1318–19, writing a long poem in praise of India, Khusrau distinguishes the "language of Delhi and its environs" from "Lahori" [Panjabi] and "Avad" [Avadhi].

Early Sufi poets, using the language in Gujarat in the 1420's, called it "Dihlavi", "Hindi", and then "Gujri". Around the same time, there is literary activity in the language in the Deccan, where it is described as *Gujri, Hindī*, and *Dakani*. In the north, the language is called *Hindi*, and *Rekhta*. Finally, in the 1780's, the word Urdu appears as language name. This name has nothing to do with armies, or army camps, or camp-markets, as even Urdu scholars tend to suppose. Actually, Urdu is the shortened form of *urdu-e mu'alla-e Shahjahanabad*, (the exalted city of Shahjahanabad), and by the end of the seventeenth century, the word "urdu" had come to mean just "the walled city of Shahjahanabad". This meaning persisted well into the nineteenth century: in 1807, we find Insha allah Khan (author of *Rani Ketki ki Kahani*, a prose romance in which he eschewed all words of Arabic or Persian origin) using the word "urdu" to mean "the city of Shahjahanbad".

Khan-e Arzu, writing around 1750, declared that Persian was "the language of the Urdu-e mu'alla" [that is, the walled city]. Hindi, or Rekhta, was however fast catching up with Persian, even among the Hindu and Muslim elite. In January 1771, Shah Alam II occupied the Red Fort at Delhi for the first time since his coronation, in Bihar, in 1759. Shah Alam was well versed in Sanskrit, and was a substantial writer of prose and verse in Hindi. Also, by virtue of his long stay in the east, where Persian was not so prevalent as in Delhi, he and his entourage seem to have conducted informal conversations in Hindi. Delhi's elite soon followed suit, and Hindi quickly replaced Persian as the *zaban-e urdu-e mu'alla-e shahjahanabad* (language of the exalted city/Court of Shahjahanabad). This soon got shortened to *zaban-e urdu-e mu'alla*, then to *zaban-e urdu*, and finally, by the 1780's, to plain *urdu*. In English, it became Urdu with a capital U. Except for the British, and some French, there were no foreign armies in India at that time. The question, therefore, of the name "Urdu" having been given to the language because of any military association, does not arise.

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, Allahabad

'Prasad on Damodaran'

I've been irked by H.Y.S. Prasad's ambiguous review of A.K. Damodaran's expedient addition to Nehruviana (*TBR*, November 1997). I do not agree with the view held by Damodaran or Prasad that by 1942 Gandhi was to describe Nehru as his "legal heir" and remark: "I know this that when I am gone, he will speak my language". If you go through the correspondence between Motilal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi in 1927 on the question of Jawaharlal's suggested "coronation" as Congress President, you learn that the younger Nehru had become Gandhi's "child-in-politics", his confidante and heir in the twenties itself and that by 1928 he had completely learnt to "speak" Gandhi's language. I'd like to add here that Jawaharlal Nehru was never a "Hamlet" as Subhas Bose thought he was. He was a professional politician and he knew quite early what he should do in politics. I doubt if the younger Nehru *seriously* differed with the Mahatma even once after 1928. The Mahatma offered the Congress mantle to Nehru in 1929 almost on a platter and the two ran the party for the rest of the freedom movement. The Congress has been a Private Limited Company, a one-man show, a remote controlled system from 1920 to 1997, from M.K. Gandhi to S.R. Kesri. It has been an organisation directly controlled or remote-controlled by Gandhi or by the Nehrus since the Nagpur session in December 1920.

The Damodaran-Prasad duo is also guilty of an untruth. The Congress rejection of the League's offer of co-operation in forming governments in UP and Bombay was the decision of the younger Nehru with the tacit endorsement of the Mahatma. Besides, Subhas Bose was not Congress President in 1937. He had not yet returned from his prolonged stay in Europe. Had he been in India, he would have fought for co-operation with Jinnah in order to avoid any further estrangement between the League and the Congress. Bose was the only leader who had the requisite foresight to have an effective arrangement with the League so as to practically demonstrate that Hindus and Muslims could work together and fight for the freedom of a united India. Had Bose survived in the Congress, he could have avoided the cataclysmic eventuality of partition.

R.S. Sharma, Professor of English, NEHU, Shillong

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The Biographical Dictionary of Greater India
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These are biographical sketches of the men and women who made Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka what they are today. It relates the panorama of a great subcontinent as mirrored in the lives of the men and women who played a part in its history.
Promilla & Co., New Delhi, 1998, pp. 406, Rs. 950.00

Simply Scandalous: Meena Kumari
Mohan Deep
The life story of one of the greats of Indian cinema, the life she lived and a glimpse of the cinema of her time chronicled by a journalist who had earlier written a biography of Madhubala.
Image Books, 1998, pp. 266, Rs. 200.00

■ CULTURE

Musical Instruments of North India: Eighteenth Century Portraits by Baltazard Solvyns
Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. and Stephen M. Slawek
The Flemish artist Baltazard Solvyns residing in Calcutta from 1791 till 1804 produced a remarkable series of etchings depicting the people and culture he observed. First published in Calcutta in 1796 and 1799 these include portrayals of 36 musical instruments as well as prints of nautch and Hindu dancing girls. Here the prints are reproduced together with Solvyn's descriptive text.
Manohar Books, 1997, pp. 153, Rs. 475.00

Ananya: A Portrait of India
Edited by S.N. Sridhar and Nirmal K. Mattoo
In *Ananya* forty of the world's most distinguished experts on India introduce India's past and present, each chapter presents the highlights of one aspect of Indian civilization and both traditional and contemporary India are covered.
The Association of Indians in America, USA, 1997, pp. 910, $79.95

■ ECOLOGY

Ecology, Climate and Empire: The Indian Legacy in Global Environmental History 1400–1940
Richard H. Grove
Far from being a modern phenomenon Grove traces the origins of present day environemntal debates about soil erosion, deforestation and climate change in the writings of early colonial administrators, doctors and missionaries.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 237, Rs. 395.00

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'Cheetal Walk' is the house built in the jungles at the foot of the Nilgiri hills by the noted conservationist E.R.C. Davidar. This book tells the story of that jungle dwelling and in so doing sketches the ecological changes in one of the most wildlife rich areas of the subcontinent and sheds light on the conservation efforts of one of the oldest Indian voluntary organizations, the Nilgiri Wildlife Association.
Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 208, Rs. 395.00

Nature and the Orient: The Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia
Edited by Richard H. Grove, Vinita Damodaran, Satpal Sangwan
Discussing diverse aspects of the environemntal history of South and Southeast Asia from a variety of perspectives this volume brings together leading experts from the fields of history, history of science, archaeology, geography and environmental studies and covers a timespan from 50,000 BC to the present.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 1036, Rs. 1250.00

■ EDUCATION

Education, Development and Underdevelopment
Edited by Sureshchandra Shukla and Rekha Kaul
The contributors to this volume maintain that while education certainly has the potential for human advancement, the ground reality is that this is not true for all and not equally for different groups in a given society. A number of facets of the relationship between education, development and underdevelopment in the Indian context are studied with emphasis on the consequences of colonial policy for education, paradox of brain drain, persisting inequalities in education, constraints in educating the poor and the marginalised etc.
Sage Publications, 1998, pp. 308, Rs. 395.00

Learning and Freedom: Policy, Pedagogy and Paradigms in Indian Education and Schooling
John Robert Shotton
Using the most recent data on educational access, achievement, quality and equity the author examines issues such as the unequal structure of opportunity and the nature of the existing learning system which discourages the development of collective and personal freedom. He outlines the philosophical and practical underpinnings of a possible new paradigm which he conceives of as a learner-centred pedagogy guided by a more community based, sociable approach.
Sage Publications, 1998 p. 209, Rs. 295.00

■ GENERAL

Jewel in the Lotus: Deeper Aspects of Hinduism
Mumtaz Ali
Equally comfortable with the *Gita* and the *Quran* the author strongly asserts that one has to live like the lotus, which while growing in water and deriving its nourishment from it still does not let water wet its petals.
Sterling Paperbacks, 1997, pp. 161, Rs. 90.00

Bangalore: The Story of a City
Maya Jayapal
The book traces the city's growth from a small mud fort built by Kempe Gowda and discusses some of the diverse elements that have helped to make it the cosmopolitan city it now is.
East-West Books, Madras, 1997, pp. 278, Rs. 250.00

Khajuraho
Part of the 'Classic India' series this book is a visual delight showing the perfect fusion of architecture and sculpture that the temples of Khajuraho are.
Rupa & Co., 1997, pp. 56, price not mentioned.

Vedantic Way of Living
Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha
In this book the author deals with the essentials of *Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Jnanayoga* and *Dhyanayoga*. Revealing how all these paths are beautifully harmonized in the comprehensive canvas of Vedanta, he finally unfolds before the reader 'The Right Way of Living'.
Sterling Paperbacks, 1997, pp. 135, Rs. 50.00

■ GENDER STUDIES

Gender, Kinship and Property Rights: Nagarattar Womanhood in South India
Yuko Nishimura
This ethnographic account of a prominent mercantile caste in Tamil Nadu provides a contemporary gendered perspective to the subject. Nishimura describes how the status of married women is protected by women's property rights and the kinship oriented system based on cross cousin marriage.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 343, Rs. 495.00

Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze
Indira Ghose
By focusing on nineteenth century British women travellers in India Ghose argues that women's perception of the Other is certainly different from men's. What emerges from the tales of these often unconventional and spirited women is how the Other always serves as a mirror for the self revealing more about the culture they themselves belong to rather than the one that they are trying to describe.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 196, Rs. 350.00

Sita Must Live: The Role of Women in Society
M. Lakshmikumari
This book is a compilation of selected editorials penned by the author in Vivekananda Kendra's magazine *Yuva Bharati*, projecting her insights into the uniqueness of Indian womanhood often repeated by Swami Vivekananda.
Sterling Paperbacks, 1997, pp. 90, Rs. 60.00

Feminizing Political Discourse: Women and the Novel in India 1857–1905
Jasbir Jain
This book views literature as a cultural construct which reflects the socio-political concerns of the age. It focuses on the centrality of the women characters and connects it with the imperial colonial encounter which placed Indian culture within effeminate constructs.
Rawat Publications, 1997, pp. 235, Rs. 350.00

Empowerment of Women Through Distance Education
P. Vijaylakshmi Pandit
In this volume the case study of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is examined in the perspective of education for women's empowerment.
Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, 1997, pp. 211, Rs. 250.00

■ LITERATURE/FICTION

Basanti
Bhisham Sahni
The story of a low caste teenaged girl brought up in one of Delhi's numerous ever-insecure bastis. In a resolution that is moving and deignified she demonstrates her firm grip on life as well as her quick ripening into a mature being unlikely to be deluded by myths of class, caste, love-marriage and the welfare state. Translated from the original Hindi by Jaidev.
Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997, pp. 175, Rs. 180.00

Ghalib: The Poet and his Age
Edited by Ralph Russell
Ghalib (1797–1869) nobleman, wit, poet and litterateur was the last great literary figure produced by Mughal India before the empire was swept away by the British. The papers in this volume present aspects of the man, the poet and his age as they appear through the eyes of eminent scholars.
Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 131, Rs. 195.00

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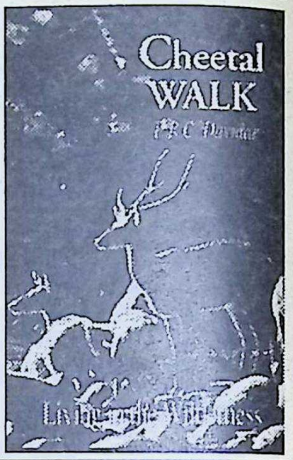

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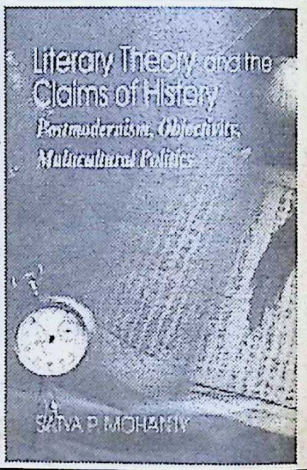

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This book provides a critical account of postmodernist theory and points the way toward an alternative to the epistemological and cultural relativisms that are now so central to both the humanities and the social sciences. Drawing on detailed analyses of reference, interpretation, and the nature of value. The author defends a 'postpositivist realist' conception of objectivity as a legitimate ideal of enquiry.

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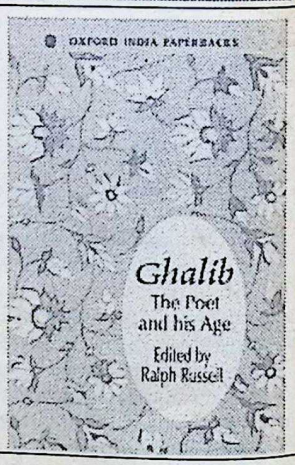

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T.C.A. Ramanujachari

15 November 1915—30 March 1998

We go to the press with this issue of *The Book Review* with a heavy heart. In the early hours of Monday, March 30, 1998, Shri T.C.A. Ramanuja Chari, founding father of The Book Review Literary Trust and father of Chandra Chari passed away.

For over twenty-two years he was a source of encouragement and advice for *The Book Review* but it was in 1989 when we were at the crossroads of survival that Shri Ramanuja Chari evolved the concept of The Book Review Literary Trust. He conceived a Trust that had vision beyond *The Book Review*, encompassing literary, intellectual and publishing activities well into the 21st century. He translated his vision into a Deed that is the fulcrum upon which all the activities of the Literary Trust stand today.

Shri Ramanuja Chari was of a liberal bent of mind. A Gold Medalist in Philosophy, he taught in Madras Christian College and came to the notice of the Professor David Hogg who arranged for him to study at Oxford. Tragically he was unable to raise the then enormous sum of Rs. 1,000.00 required and could not proceed to Oxford. It was therefore with great happiness that he was able to see his two grand-daughters and a grandson fulfill his dream.

After practising Law in Madras from 1941–1948 Shri Ramanuja Chari joined the IAS in 1948. He was Deputy Commissioner in Amravati and was deeply involved in Pandit Nehru's development programmes with people's participation. With the reorganization of the States in 1956 he moved to Madhya Pradesh and served as Deputy Commissioner, Raigarh and Director of Tribal Welfare, Raipur. Moving to Delhi to the Home Ministry he became Secretary of the Santhanam Committee on Vigilance and was the first to incorporate the Ombudsman concept. Returning to Madhya Pradesh he was Additional Commissioner Jabalpur, Health Secretary, Home Secretary, and Secretary to the Administrative Reforms Commission. In 1975 he retired as Member of the Board of Revenue, Gwalior.

A legal expert with a formidable knowledge of constitutional law and an admirlistrator, Shri Ramanuja Chari was also an educationist. As adviser to the Scindia family from 1976 onwards and on the Board of Governors of the Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya, Gwalior, he was deeply involved with the management of the school.

Above all Shri Ramanuja Chari inculcated in all those who came close to him a sense of responsibility to contribute to society and deep sense of social values. On behalf of all those associated with *The Book Review* and The Book Review Literary Trust, we remember with deep gratitude Shri Ramanuja Chari without whom the survival of *The Book Review* would not have been possible.

Chitra Narayanan

A gentleman, it is said, is one who gives more than he receives from society. Mr. Ramanujachari was a gentleman, but this was not the measure of him, for he found so much in life that the giving would have overwhelmed a lesser man. At the age of 82, impatient of his handwriting, he mastered the use of a word-processor; a simple enough task for him, undaunted by the stories of other's struggles against the Machine. This small victory summed up his outlook; he had a zest for life. It is a tired phrase, but, in Mr. Ramanujachari's case, razor-apt. In a world where young men and women act as if there is no tomorrow and everything must be acquired and achieved today, Mr. Ramanujachari behaved as if tomorrow was forever. He moved to his own rhythm—unhurried, but intense, finding a richness in life that gave the lie to his physical ailments. Indeed, those weaknesses only made the victory, when it came, all the more sweet. And the victory always came—for, above all, he was a perfectionist—impatient of bad manners, in an age in which grace is a social solecism, and dismissive of shoddy work. He loved craft and artistry, and he sought these out and found them—in the cut of the cloth, in his superbly insouciant posture as he leaned on his walking stick and most especially in his writing. His was the culture of inter-relationships, between humans and their world. Be it cricket, shoes, a new dish, politics or the purchase of a car, the pros and cons had to be debated with verve—whether with a young person of twenty or a mature sixty-two. But there was no cynicism or intolerance in him—only a desire to see those around him reach the limits of their abilities.

It is said that the support of one's spouse gives one the confidence to stride the universe. This he received in abundance from his partner of 57 years. Justifiably impatient with his involvement with everyone and everything out of concern for his health, she was with him and for him always. Together, they set an example of grace and continuity that served as a touchstone for all those who knew them.

Mr. Ramanujachari loved cricket, and it is with a tribute to a cricketer that I invoke his memory:

Dead, and from death a myriad memories arise,
Deathless, we thank you, friend, that once you lived.

Srinivas Iyengar

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Nehru's Vision of India and the World—Then and Now*

K.R. Narayanan

I am immensely honoured to have been asked to give this Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture. I feel very humble to speak about a man who was the liberator of India and one of the liberators of the world and one to whom I was personally obligated.

He had an integrated vision of India and the world. He wanted to revive the ancient glory of India in a modern form and to eliminate poverty, ignorance and disease from this country and to introduce science and technology, prosperity and progress to millions of its people. His dream was to eliminate inequalities and injustices of this age-old society and to give it a modern form and significance. He had a sense of mission for India, a mission of peace and liberation. He was attracted by Vivekananda's ideal of unity and strength for his country and by the ringing declaration of Vivekananda when he said that our isolation from all other nations of the world is the cause of our degradation and its only remedy is in getting back to the current of the rest of the world. Thus, the unity and strength of India and being in the mainstream of the developments of the world were integrated in his thinking and his actions.

As early as 1927, he sent a Report to the AICC after the International Congress against Colonialism and Imperialism in Brussels, about the future in India of its policies. He spelt out in this his vision of the future of Indian unity, the way he wanted to deal with its minorities problem, the future economic structure, the social problems and the foreign affairs of independent India. It was an audacious exercise, the first of its kind. All that followed was an elaboration, intensification and integration of these four questions into a coherent whole and into a philosophy of action.

For India, his vision was dominated by the need for unity and independence. The unity of India was a dream that haunted him throughout his life. He was obsessed at that time as all Indian nationalists were, with the British view of Indian unity spelt out by Mrs. Strachey in 1888 that there is not and there was never an India possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity—physical, political, social, or religious. Western perceptions of India, more or less, followed this original view propounded by the British. Much later, after India's independence, a Yugoslav scholar Milovan Djilas said, "Despite my sympathy for India, I am not convinced that it can remain united in the long run." Another intellectual, one of the assistants of President Eisenhower wrote in a futuristic piece, that "the avowedly democratic society of India may be reasonably counted upon not to unify but to fragment, probably into as many parts as Western Europe." Richard Nixon on his book *Leaders* marvelled at the powerful personality of Jawaharlal Nehru who could hold together India during its critical years and maintain it as a single nation. But he also believed that India could have been a nation of as many countries as Europe and he expressed the view that it might have been good for the unifiers to keep India as one, but it was probably not good for the people of India.

I am not sure if in the glorious privacy of their minds the strategic thinkers of western countries do not think more or less in the same terms about the future of India. America seems to have swallowed wholesale the British view, and the assessment of China is not known, but I recollect one sentence that Premier Chou en Lai said during the Bangladesh war—he characterized the fall of Dhaka not as "a victory for India but as a beginning of a conflagration which would ultimately consume the whole subcontinent."

Jawaharlal Nehru's dream of Indian unity in this context is a vision of great significance for us and the world. Like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel, he was one of those who made Indian unity firm and unassailable. The concept of unity in diversity was too mystic for outsiders to grasp or to understand. The multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-political pluralism of Indian life and society, to my mind is a forerunner of the multipolar pluralism that is taking shape today in the world. It was this fact that Jawaharlal Nehru proclaimed in regard to India and also of the world.

The idea of unity was something of a floating dream throughout Indian history. The Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and British Empires in India had given to this dream of unity, a cultural, spi tual, administrative or military shap But Mahatma Gandhi gave to th concept the immense unity of the ma mind; Sardar Patel consolidated t administrative and territorial unity. was Jawaharlal Nehru who gave l dian unity a profound and concre economic and emotional content. T Five Year Plans that he formulated i troduced a pattern of development unity to the whole of India and a certa economic interdependence of the d ferent parts of India, perhaps for t first time in our long history. To this added the concept of a casteless, clas less society that was egalitarian an socialistic in its orientation. He investe it with harmony and a sense of em tional unity. He gave to this vision form which was unprecedented in th history of India and all this was e compassed in the framework of d mocracy with this luxuriant pluralis of Indian life.

He was a prophet of the mixe economy in India and the world. T economic content that he gave to t fact and the vision of Indian unity w spelt out by him very clearly in the Fi Year plan documents. In his Preface the Third Plan he wrote, "In the la analysis, economic development is b a means to an end—the building u through effort and sacrifice, wide shared, of a society without caste, cla or privilege which offers to every se tion of the community and to all par of the country, t he fullest opportunit to grow and contribute to the nation well-being". Again he wrote, "It neither necessary nor desirable that t economy should become a monolith type of organisation offering little plac for experimentation either as to form or as to modes of functioning".

Today there is a tendency to loo upon the economic system, the mixe economy that Nehru operated, something of a rigid, almost totalitari system from which we have had depart in the modern era of libera isation. But that was not his concept mixed economy. It was not a mixtur which was rigidly set but was to var according to circumstances, to the stag of technology. And if the bureaucrat deformation of this mixed econom has affected initiative and enterprise our system, it is not that there w something basically faulty with Nehru vision of the Indian economic system It is because we could not or we did n adapt to changing circumstance changing technological stages society.

He had integrally related this co ception of the economy and the do mestic set up of India to his vision of t world, to his foreign policy. And this

* Text of the 29th Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture delivered by the President of India, Shri K.R. Narayanan on 13.11.1997. Printed with the consent of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

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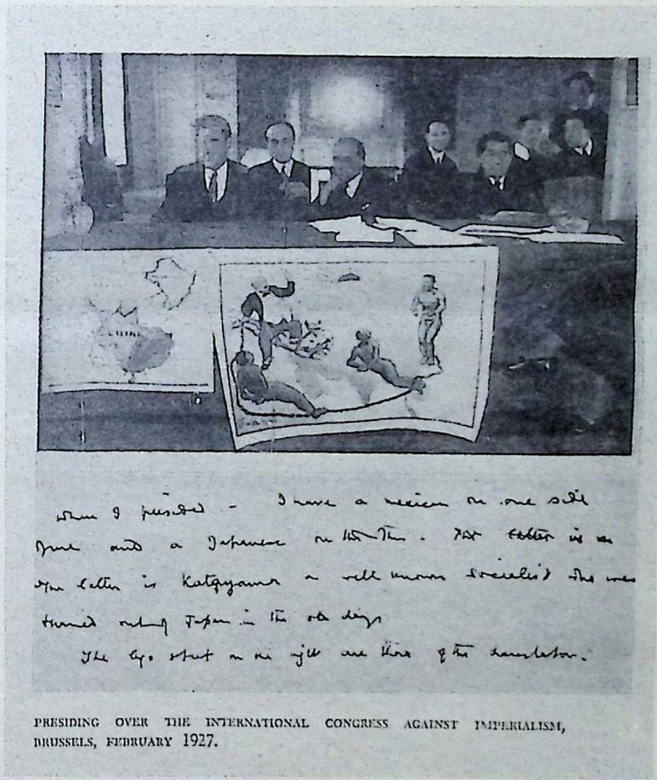
had stated clearly again in the Third Five Year Plan in a chapter written by himself. He said, "In the larger context, of the world, realisation of this objective for India as for other countries is intimately tied up with and dependent on the maintenance of peace. . . Peace, therefore, becomes of paramount importance and an essential prerequisite for national progress." This is how almost naturally, spontaneously, he made the transition from domestic preoccupations to preoccupations with larger foreign policy. But however much he was preoccupied with the world and with foreign policy objectives, he knew and said that very clearly, India was his basic consideration. As early as 1942, he said at a press conference. "But, ultimately, naturally I have to judge any question from the Indian point of view. If India perishes I must say selfishly, if you like to call it, it does not do me any good if other nations survived."

His world outlook was therefore India-oriented and again I would like to refer to his 1927 report. He linked India to the wider struggle, the anti-imperialist struggle that was going on in the world and he remarked that we must understand world movements and policies and fashion our movement accordingly.

The vision of One World had dawned upon him and he asserted that in the One World of his dream he would give up a measure of freedom of action to an international body of which India would be an equal member, but she will do so if other countries agreed to limit their sovereignty in like measure. It is interesting that this very thought was articulated by Mahatma Gandhi in very telling terms. Gandhiji said once, "my service of India includes the service of humanity. Isolated independence is not the goal. It is voluntary inter-dependence. The better minds of the world desire today not absolutely independent states but a federation of friendly interdependent states. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting independence". This is a statement pregnant with meaning even today. Gandhiji wanted the ability to be totally independent without necessarily always asserting that independence. This is something we ought to remember in the present opening up to the world. In a globalized One World system if this ability to be independent is crippled or constricted then we would have lost something basic. It is not necessary for us to always assert our independence but we must retain as a precious thing the ability to be independent. This was the crux of Nehru's One World vision.

From the interplay between nationalism and internationalism was born Nehru's policy of Nonalignment and peaceful coexistence. He stated several times that inspite of the conflicts and divisions in the world, the world is moving towards alignments, groupings and attempts by certain groupings at dominating the world. As early as 1927, he sensed this trend and said that the United States may some day develop a kind of imperialism, that Britain might join with the United States in a powerful Anglo-Saxon bloc. He also feared that even the Soviet Union might develop a new type of imperialism. In 1940, he wrote in an article that if the idea of a World Federation did not materialize, there might emerge a colossal grouping of nations, with a danger of big wars. Later, sitting in the solitude of Ahmednagar Jail he wrote in his *Discovery of India* that he saw the outlines of two groupings emerging around USA and USSR and asked where this would leave the millions of people in Asia and Africa. They would remain an unawakened, discontented, seething humanity no longer prepared to tolerate the existing conditions. He saw the common threads of sentiment and invisible links which hold them together. This was his discovery of the Third World or the Nonaligned world that was beginning to emerge in fact though not in name. But he did not look at it as a new bloc but as an area of peace, geographically expanding and transcending geography, reaching out into the minds of peace-loving people everywhere.



PRESIDING OVER THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AGAINST IMPERIALISM, BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 1927.

One of the greatest contributions of Jawaharlal Nehru to the world was the precious gift of Nonalignment that he gave to it. We do not realize the originality of this idea. If one reads textbooks of international politics and international relations written 40 or 50 years ago, you would not find the word Nonalignment or the concept of nonalignment but today it is impossible to write anything about foreign policy without referring, at least, in passing to this concept. He introduced between the two sides to the Cold War, a nonaligned world, an area of peace, which prevented the sharp division of the world into two warring worlds. It is this area in between that played a very crucial role in preventing a headlong collision between the titanic forces in the world.

Eventually, inside the blocs, he detected the growing trends towards peace, towards accommodation, towards the need of understanding each other. Nehru encouraged this process. It was for him the yearning for a One World society. He wanted India and the nonaligned countries to provide a bridge between the warring factions, for the maintenance of peace. He thought of India as a platform for the two contestants to meet, may be first of all for competition between each other and ultimately for reconciling their differences. The manner in which the Cold War finally ended shows the validity of Nehru's analysis of world forces. It shows how within the blocs themselves, there were powerful currents for mutual accommodation.

In 1964, a few months before he passed away, he explained the nature and the role of Nonalignment and it is worth quoting in full what he said: "The basis of Nonalignment is our area of peace which has been consistently increased since the inception of the policy. This not only helps to create a sort of no-war land between the military blocs by making their war-like confrontation difficult, but also provides them with a common ground for cooperation in something like a workshop of peace. As more nations keep joining the peace clul as against the nuclear club and the Cold War club, we expect this nonaligned grouping to grow and absorb other nations, the European nations like France and Czechoslovakia which today belong to NATO and boast of military alliances. We want the whole world to become part of this area of peaceful coexistence including ultimately the United States and the Soviet Union." This was the vision of Nehru's nonaligned world. Now that the Cold War is over, it has been argued by many scholars that the rationale of Nonalignment has disappeared. But the way in which Nehru has put forward his concept of Nonalignment in this quotation shows that its validity has survived.

Various theories are put forward with regard to the collapse of the Cold War system. Questions are asked like who won the Cold War and who was the loser. The Cold War's end is not considered as a failure of a system of international relations that the great powers had established; it is interpreted as a victory of one against the other. I would like to discuss this question a little later but before that let us have a look at Nehru's home front, his practical as well as visionary policies in the neighbourhood of India and in Asia. Today, we talk a great deal about the "Look East" policy, about our association with ASEAN, our aspiration to belong to APEC, about our initiative in the Indian Ocean Rim, the formation and evolution of SAARC and our good neighbourly policy that we have initiated recently. But if we look back upon and analyze what happened during the early Nehru period with India's relations and policy to the neighbours, it would become very clear that he was the forerunner of the Asian policy and he had a dream about Asia. And surprisingly here again I can go back to

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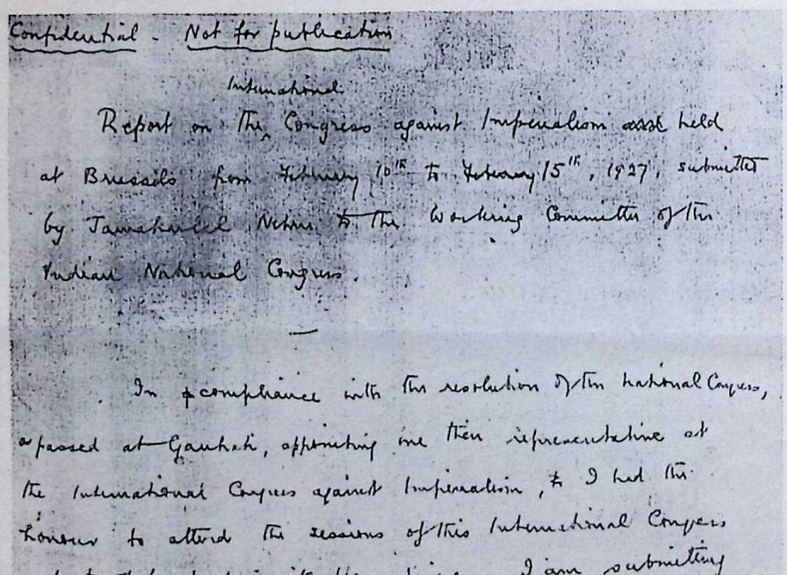
1927 when he said that, in developing our foreign policy, we should naturally first cultivate friendly relations with countries of the East which have so much in common with us. And if you look at the conduct of his foreign policy during the early period, we would find that it was with neighbours like Nepal, Iran, Afghanistan, Burma, Ceylon and Turkey, that he had the most active relationship. Indeed, treaties were concluded with several of these countries and if one looks at the ambassadorial appointments he made, he certainly sent important Ambassadors to the capitals, Washington, London, Paris, Moscow, but some of the best men, public men, were selected and sent to our immediate neighbours.

And then let us look at the actual conduct of policies. In fact he once wrote in a letter to the Chief Ministers, "I cannot appreciate the question being asked of us as to whether we are with the American group of powers or with the Soviet group. We are friendly with both, but essentially we function for ourselves and develop closer contacts with out neighbours". There was something, a phrase which we have forgotten, which was very current in those days, the South-East Asia Pattern. He had established the closest relations between India, Burma and Indonesia. These three countries followed more or less the same policies, world policies, and this relationship came to be known as a South-East Asia pattern which by and by extended to other countries in the region. In fact, he took considerable interest in Burma. When there was a civil war in Burma, he allowed the Burmese government to buy arms in India. At one time, he made a statement that the security of Burma is the security of India. And you are all aware of what he did during the Indonesian struggle for independence. No country in Asia has been involved so intimately in the freedom struggle of another country as India, under Nehru, was involved in the Indonesian struggle. He called a conference on Indonesia in New Delhi, which determined the stand the United Nations took for Indonesia getting its freedom. During the time of the Japanese Peace Treaty, he had the imagination to conclude a separate treaty with Japan recognizing Japan not as a defeated party but as an independent entity. I recollect soon after, at the time when the treaty was negotiated, I was a junior diplomat in Tokyo and how profoundly this gesture affected the minds and hearts of the ordinary Japanese.

Then, the role in Indo-China and Korea. These are just forgotten as if they are not significant events and people say very glibly these days that Nehru had neglected his neighbours and Asia and was playing games with the great powers only. When the Korean War broke out, it was India's diplomacy that prevented a real war breaking out and that helped in the peace-making in that country. He said at one time that if this Korean war leads to a real war, all the dreams of India, its dreams of planning and development will be reduced to ashes and therefore it was incumbent on India to do something to prevent the spread of this war. And when he was criticized about the futility of his intervention in Korea—some speeches were made in Parliament—he said, that if another occasion arises, he would send peace mission troops to Korea not once but a hundred times. That was the degree of his involvement in Asia at that time, an involvement which was constructive, imaginative, realistic and produced peaceful results.

So also in Indo-China. I would like to say only one thing about the Indo-China settlement which India helped to bring about. After the Geneva Declaration was announced, he pointed out that the Convention of nonintervention which was embedded in the declaration should be extended to the rest of Asia and it should include even the great powers. In fact nonintervention was the basic tenet of his foreign policy. As you know in the five principles of peaceful coexistence which we signed with China, nonintervention is one of the important principles. It is not very much known that while it was Premier Chou en Lai who really formulated these five principles first, it was on Nehru's insistence that the principle of nonintervention was incorporated finally, after the signing of the Tibet Agreement. It was this principle that he held fast to as being central to peace in Asia and in the world. What I wish to emphasize is that Nehru's central preoccupation was Asia and it was standing on the platform of Asia that he projected his policy to the world as a whole. In fact, the events which happened in Asia, whether through great conferences like the Asian Relations Conference or the Bandung Conference, these had a world significance. Not only did they impact on the Indo-China war and the Korean war, but also had world significance. They are the measure of world events of the time. Major wars could have broken out in the world if peace had not been re-established primarily through India's efforts.

There are one or two more complicated relationships in this region, one with China and another with Pakistan. About Nehru's China policy it is not necessary to say much to this distinguished audience except to stress that what he wanted was the acceptance of China by the rest of the world. He had a few considerations in projecting this policy. First was, of course, the relationship between the two ancient civilizations of Asia which he thought should work together in friendship and cooperation. He wanted that to happen. Then he had another consideration. His assessment was that China, even at that time it signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty, would be an independent party working independently herself and not by any means as a satellite of the Soviet Union. He wanted this fact to blossom out as an actual fact. Therefore, his method was to bring out China into the world, into Asia. It was this policy which was bitterly suspected and opposed by the United States. I read recently a speech President Clinton made over the Voice of America after or during the visit of the President Jiang Zemin and he said—I am quoting it because it is a



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International

Report on the Congress against Imperialism held at Brussels from February 10th to February 15th, 1927, submitted by Jawaharlal Nehru to the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress.

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In compliance with the resolution of the National Congress, passed at Gauhati, appointing me their representative at the International Congress against Imperialism, & I had the honour to attend the sessions of this International Congress and to take part in its proceedings. I am submitting separately another brief report for publication and for distribution amongst the members of the All India Congress Committee. But as it was not possible to refer to many matters in that report and as I wish the Working Committee to be in possession of all the facts, in order to enable them to take such action as they may deem necessary, I have decided to submit this further and more detailed report.

The Brussels Congress, regarded from any point of view, was an event of first class importance and it is likely to have far-reaching results. Thus the English press, so far as I am aware, has given little or no publicity to it, with the exception of some labour organs. The continental press gave some more publicity but even here

Facsimile of the Report on 'The Congress Against Imperialism' held at Brassils in Feb, 1927. The Report was made by Jawaharlal Nehru

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echo of what Nehru said in the 1950s about China—"the isolation of China is unworkable, counter-productive and potentially dangerous and isolation would encourage the Chinese to become hostile and to adopt policies of conflict with our own interest and values." The words used by President Clinton are not the same as Nehru's but the meaning is the same. It was precisely this argument Nehru had advanced in favour of the recognition of China by other countries after the liberation. Of course people say that his policy was a failure but why that policy failed was because while he recognized China and some other countries recognized China, the United States and its allies did not recognize China at the right time and that led to immense suffering and conflicts and tension in Asia. Therefore, one is glad to read the statement of President Clinton today, not to justify our policies retrospectively, but to say that for the future, this is a good sign.

After another series of meetings in Beijing, between President Yeltsin and President Jiang Zemin, an interesting communique was issued by them. I am only referring to what I read in the newspapers here. The communique says that the time for alliances, the time for triangular strategic relations, is over. Well, China and, earlier, the Soviet Union had believed in such concepts. I find this very significant. Those who say that Nonalignment has no relevance in the present period ought to consider these statements which are echoes of the language of Nonalignment being spoken today by the great powers.

Today, we are trying to become members of the APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. Nehru had written in his *Discovery of India* in 1945 that the Pacific would be the nerve centre of world politics in the next century and India would have to do much about this area. India is today not a member of the APEC but she is a dialogue partner of ASEAN, closely associated with it and involved in South East Asian developments. But the difference is that while we are *trying* to be in Asia and Asia Pacific today, we were a central player in Asia during the Nehru era. I am not saying this as any sort of criticism because there are many reasons, regional and international, for this, but I would like to put the record straight by saying that during Nehru's period India was an active player and an influential player in Asian affairs.

After the Cold War, apart from everything else, economic relations have assumed supreme importance. Some people have made the projection that economic wars may arise in the world. I do not know; it need not necessarily be so, but one has to consider the great gap and the inherent conflict between the developing world and the developed world and it is in this context and in regard to this problem that Nonalignment has been asserting itself as a major force.

And then, in the military sense, one should ask as to why, even though the Warsaw Pact has been dissolved, NATO remains in existence. There are signs of it being used for cooperation for constructive purposes. But whether in Europe or in Asia, one does not know whether new alignments and groupings in conflict with each other might arise in the future or not. And in this context, Nehru's Nonalignment has a major preventive role to play even in the present world.

A new international order was a dream with Nehru. He was a great believer in the United Nations. Today we are talking about restructuring the United Nations. It was in 1960 that he said in the United Nations that the UN has not been fair to Asia and Africa; they have a right to be in the Security Council, he said. While, he said, he did not want to press the point at that time he did wish to register the right of the countries of Asia and Africa to have a say and a role and a place in the Security Council of the United Nations.

And, of course, he was a passionate advocate of disarmament. Disarmament is talked of today in terms different than in Nehru's time and we have to direct our attention to that ethereal realm in which a high-technology armaments race is taking place. So if one supplies Nehru's advocacy of disarmament to the present stage, one has to somehow bring these questions of high-technology weapons almost unseen by the common eyes of the world and ask how it would be controlled and how it could be made a point of discussion in international fora.

All these questions are integrally related to Nehru's vision of the world and his vision of India. I think we can follow his vision only by making his vision of India a credible vision today. Today there is desperate need to inject into our thinking a bit of his vision of India of nearly one billion people, and see whether we can march together in unity and peace towards strength and make an impact on the world of the kind that Nehru would have liked us to make.

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Contextualizing Narrative Art

Romila Thapar

DISCOURSE IN EARLY BUDDHIST ART: VISUAL NARRATIVES OF INDIA

By Vidya Dehejia

Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, pp. ix+332, Rs. 1500.00

This is an enquiry into Buddhist narrative art in the study of which the role of the story itself is subordinated to the technique by which stories are communicated. The first part of the book explores the presentation of the narrative and identifies several different modes of visual narration which have been utilized by the artists who sculpted and painted at these early monuments. The stories are taken from texts on the life of the Buddha and from the *Jatakas* or other parts of the Pali Canon. The communication was generally with a viewer familiar with the stories and therefore presumably the artist could rearrange the constituents of the story to suit his representation of it. The modes identified are frequently found juxtaposed on the same monument, suggesting that each was a viable option.

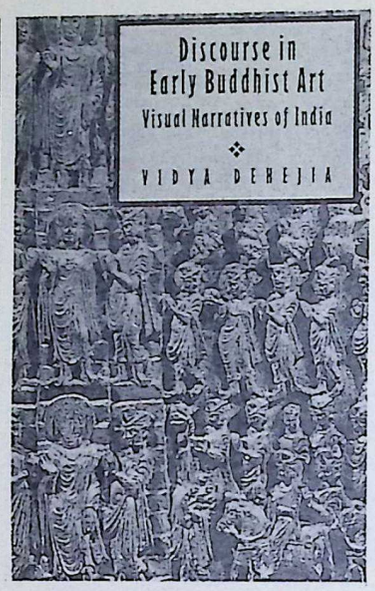
The modes range widely and are listed as monoscentic, depicting a single, identifiable event in a story; monoscenic narratives focussing on the depiction of the Buddha; continuous narrative using more than a single event; sequential narrative where each scene is demarcated; synoptic narrative where multiple modes are depicted in a single frame; and conflated narrative where the image of the Buddha is dominant and transcends time and space. Time is seen as cyclic, hence the generally non-linear depiction of the story. However, it could be argued that both in the life story of the Buddha and in the *Jataka* stories narrating the previous lives of the Buddha, there is a linear element, particularly as none are in another time cycle. Resort to cyclic time as an explanation needs to be reconsidered, for there is frequently an intersection of linear and cyclic time.

Among the more interesting aspects of the data under discussion is the question of who selected the narratives. Since much of the depiction is based on individual donors providing the wherewithal, did each of them specify what they wanted depicted? Or was the selection left to the supervisory monks of the Sangha?

Further chapters in the first part of the book analyse what are referred to as the "emblems". The multivalent nature of the sign is discussed. The concept of multivalence is said to be important as it is a mix of icon, index and symbol, where index refers to footprints, a parasol, a vacant seat and similar indicators. This is not aniconism as it was earlier labelled, a distinction which is useful and necessary. Another chapter discusses the Buddhist texts from where the narratives are taken and their chronology.

The second part of the book consists of eight chapters, each on a major site or set of sites, incorporating Buddhist narrative. These discuss the manner of communicating the narrative, the story communicated and the patrons and donors involved with these. Many of these sites carry a mixture of different modes and the images which constitute the story are not in any specific order. Most of these sites, barring the Gupta and post-Gupta period sites discussed in the last chapter, were Buddhist *stupas* of an earlier period. They were enlarged and enclosed by railings, usually in the first century BC and were embellished with low reliefs in stone added to the *stupa* or sculpted on the railing, on pillars and *toranas*, all providing the space for the narratives.

That *stupas* acquired stone railings at a particular point in time is a theme which could have been pursued further. Some *stupas* such as the one at Pauni originally had a wooden railing which was replaced with one in stone. Were these railings meant to resist damage to the *stupa* as is hinted at in a few inscriptions from Sanchi, where imprecatory



verses on the gateway threaten those who might damage the *stupa* or remove parts of it elsewhere—suggesting that there might have been some attempts at vandalising *stupas*? Were the railings demarcating the circumambulatory path and therefore did they have a ritual purpose? Were they intended to provide more space for the embellishment of the *stupa*? The date is significant since this is the period which sees the growth of the commercial and artisan professions as also the opening up of small-scale agriculture in various regions. The people involved with this change emerge as the main patrons of many of these *stupas*.

Stories such as those of the Vessantara, Mahakappi, Shibi, Chaddanta and other *Jatakas*, or the animal *Jatakas*, would have been familiar not only to Buddhist visitors but to others as well, since they were drawn from a large body of folk stories although contextualised in Buddhist ethical norms. Some of the narrative scenes carry a small inscription mentioning the name of the story—no doubt a prompt for those acting as guides or for the knowledgeable lay person. Such labels decline in later times. At some sites such as those of south India and of Gandhara, the stories from the Buddha biographies assume greater importance than the *Jataka* stories, with the texts of northern Buddhism becoming important sources. The popularity of the *lalitavistara*, or the *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya* or the *Divyavadana*, ensured that the vastly embroidered events of the life of the Buddha, became familiar to many.

The main sties discussed are the *stupas* at Bharhut, Sanchi, Pauni, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, the railings from Bodh Gaya and Mathura, the

An exception to such community patronage was the stupa at Nagarjunakonda where the donors were largely the women of the Ikshvaku ruling family. An explanation for this gender differentiation would be of interest. The Ikshvaku men were patrons of Vedic Brahmanism. Was the gender division derived from ritual concerns?

stupas in Gandhara and Sarnatha, some murals at Ajanta, narrative sculpture from Pala-Sena times and the illustrated manuscripts and scroll painting from the Himalayan regions.

Among the early *stupas*, Bharhut and Sanchi were well-preserved and extensively decorated. Bharhut provides many examples of the monoscenic and the synoptic since the scenes are depicted in specific frames visible to those moving along the circumambulatory path. Sanchi Stupa No. 1 has a greater number of scenes from the life of the Buddha. Of the embellishments, probably the most impressive were the sculptured stone slabs added to the *stupa* at Amaravati. The *stupas* in Gandhara tended to be smaller but taller and the drum of the *stupa* therefore allowed of greater space for low reliefs. A smaller size encouraged single donors, some commissioning the narrative of the Buddha's life cycle.

Among the more interesting aspects of the data under discussion is the question of who selected the narratives. Since much of the depiction is based on individual donors providing the wherewithal, did each of them specify what they wanted depicted? Or was the selection left to the supervisory monks of the Sangha? That some of the stories were repeated may suggest, as the author argues, that the donors gave their preference. Alternatively it could be an indication of what the Sangha sought to emphasize. The glorification of gift giving explicit in the Vessantara *Jataka* would be one obvious example of this. It might be worth investigating whether there are any patterns in the correlation between donors and stories, particularly as there are various categories of each.

The identity and categories of donors at these *stupas* is a theme which various historians have now worked on, touching as it does on questions of

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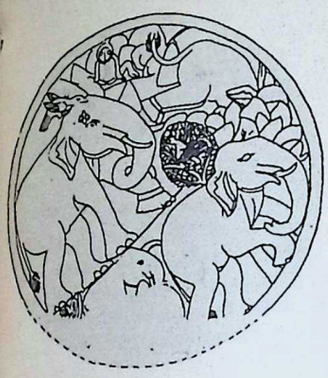

patronage, donations and gender. At most of these sites royal donations are noticeably small or absent. Donations from the aristocratic elites tend to be those from lesser feudatories. The vast number of brief votive inscriptions recording these donations are from lay persons—householders, traders, bankers, artisans and small-scale land owners—but many also record gifts from monks of varying seniority and from nuns. Bharhut provides a list of monks carrying out a variety of administrative functions related to the Sangha. From the numbers quoted by the author, there is at the earlier sites a predominance of gifts from laymen and monks. This gradually gives way somewhat later to an almost equal number from lay women and nuns at some sites. Joint donations can be from housewives who also mention their husband, brothers, sisters, sons, or from householders who refer to wives, sisters and daughters, suggesting donations made by families. Joint donations were sometimes even made by members of the Sangha such as the *navakamikas* at Amaravati. It would seem that monks and nuns either brought some wealth with them when they joined the Sangha which they gifted to the Sangha, or else were permitted to receive wealth even after joining the Sangha, perhaps on condition that it was donated to the Sangha, as for example, through votive gifts towards the embellishment of a *stupa*. The visibility of women donors is a striking feature of these votive inscriptions.

An exception to such community patronage was the *stupa* at Nagarjunakonda where the donors were largely the women of the Ikshvaku ruling family. An explanation for this gender differentiation would be of interest. The Ikshvaku men were patrons of Vedic Brahmanism. Was the gender division derived from ritual concerns? or communities in Andhra at that time, to whom royalty would wish to extend patronage, but not patronage of the first order. Patronage from those connected with the ruling family of the Vakatakas or high officials in their administration is available from some of the fifth century caves with wall paintings at Ajanta.

Vidya Dehejia's study of visual narratives in early Buddhist art is most helpful in setting out the context of what one sees at so many *stupa* sites of the early centuries A.D., and provides insights into how the embellishment of the monument was perceived by the donor, the craftsman who created the panels or the murals, and possibly the monk "administrator". In corelating the textual version of a story with its visual counterpart, the use of analyses derived from those who have worked on folk tales, such as Vladimir Propp, may have provided additional illumination. The sculptor or painter separated the story into its constituent elements and then reassembled them according to his own design. The space allotted for the story would have also influenced its being represented as monoscenic or as sequential narrative. The viewer is required to recognize the constituents and reconstruct the story in its known form. How the reassembled pattern was arrived at is examined by the author in discussing various narratives, but perhaps a further exploration of this activity would have made the process even clearer.

Vidya Dehejia concludes her study by stating, "Philosophical changes in the Buddhist creed, along with the evolving pantheon of supra-mundane beings, led to a sharp decline in the earlier vibrant art of Buddhist visual narrative" (p. 273). Her own analyses suggest that there was more to it than philosophical changes and the evolving pantheon, for these changes had first to be visualized by the donor and the sculptor before they could take form as narrative art. The reasons for the decline may be sought in other changes as well.

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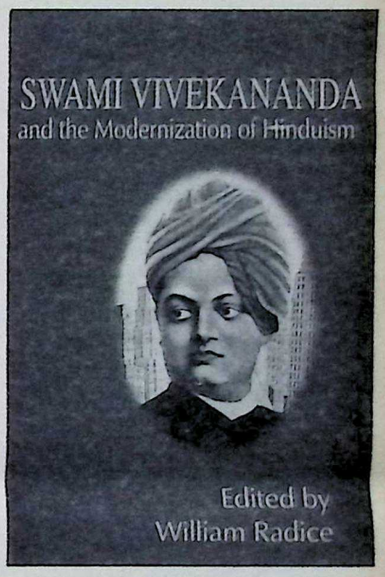
Contextualizing A Very 'Modern' Man

Amiya P. Sen

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND THE MODERNIZATION OF HINDUISM

Edited by William Radice

SOAS Studies on South Asia, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 299, Rs. 475.00



Two important events connected with the Ramakrishna Vivekananda movement have been commemorated in the recent past, first, the centenary celebrations of Vivekananda's well-known address before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and following that, the centenary celebrations of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The book under review is really a part of the first and includes fourteen essays nearly all of which were written for a workshop convened by the University of London (SOAS) in November 1993. It would be important to point out however that the idea behind the workshop is not simply commemorative but a larger social and academic purpose of consciously contesting the systematic appropriation of the Swamiji's life and message by Right-Fundamentalist combines. From this perspective, the SOAS workshop and the general drift of the scholarly output that emerged therefrom may indeed be seen as the rightful rebuttal of VHP celebrations of Vivekananda's Chicago Address, also held sometime in 1993.

Its academic excellence notwithstanding, there is a certain structural weakness about the book on which I feel I should comment at the outset. Evidently, some of the essays in the book were added on almost as an afterthought to 'embrace not only Vivekananda himself but his contemporaries and the religious, social and cultural context from which he emerged (Foreword: ix). *Ipso facto*, there is nothing fundamentally wrong about this decision and I have no hesitation in saying that the essays which appear to have been subsequently added are in themselves admirable works of scholarship. On the other hand, if strictly enforced, the framework adopted by the Editor would leave out William R. Pinch's essay (Essay 12) which covers the period 1918–36 and does not concern either Vivekananda, his contemporaries or the specific context from which they emerged. In some ways the thematic continuity too is disturbed by somewhat randomly situating these essays. Perhaps this book would have been more reader-friendly if, for instance, Nita Kumar's essay on "Sanskrit Pandits and the modernisation of Sanskrit in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Essay 3) could have been clubbed together with Vivienne Baumfield's "Science and Sanskrit: Vivekananda's views on education" (Essay 9). Ideally, of course, the book should have been so structured as to bring together all essays more directly concerned with Vivekananda, leaving the rest (Essays 3, 5, 6, 12) to constitute a separate section. In commenting on the essays of this book I shall by and large follow this pattern.

The opening essay by Professor Roychaudhuri "Swami Vivekananda's construction of Hinduism" (SOAS Annual Lecture, 1997) sets the pace as it were, for most of the essays that follow. It is also of particular interest to this reviewer for apparently, Professor Roychaudhuri's major arguments are born of his dissatisfaction with what I had suggested in my 1993 study *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal*. I have indeed reason to be grateful to Professor

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. . . if Vivekananda is today increasingly identified with a new Hindu-Fundamentalist resurgence, not all of it can be attributed to manipulative constructions. Somewhat contrary to what both Professors Nemai Sadhan Bose (Essay I) and Roychoudhuri say, there are certain ideas or suggestions in Vivekananda which consciously or unconsciously fed into the reactionary climate in late nineteenth century Bengal.

Roychoudhuri for reviving and reinvigorating an older debate as engaging with it once again gives me an opportunity to be a little clearer about both his arguments and mine.

I have no quarrel whatsoever with Professor Roychoudhuri's preference for 'Hindu reaction' in place of 'Hindu revivalism' (p. 13). The reactive element was indeed strongly present in revivalist attitudes. On the other hand, 'reaction' may be only as adequate or inadequate an expression as 'revival' in encapsulating the delicate nuances of public opinion in late nineteenth century Bengal. I feel that at one level, 'revival' is a more broad-based term which incorporates both outright orthodox reaction and a more positive response which leaned towards reform, albeit to an extent and conducted at a certain pace. 'Hindu reaction' on the other hand appears to create too sharp a wedge between the two positions. One other reason why I chose to use the term 'revival' is its consistent and extensive use by Hindu-Bengali figures of the day and somehow I cannot bring myself to believe that this was done for the lack of alternative (more appropriate) expressions. It is quite likely that in the context of the late nineteenth century, the choice of the word 'revival' was quite tendentious. Nevertheless its widespread use by writers and commentators cutting across many cultural sub-stratas;, 'liberal', and 'conservative', 'reformer' and 'reactionary' is something that historical reconstruction cannot entirely overlook.

I am also not sure if ultimately, Professor Roychaudhuri's conclusions about Vivekananda's life and work are so radically different from the ones I profess. Perhaps he misjudges me in suggesting that my work only 'confirms the received perception' about Vivekananda representing the 'high noon of Hindu revival' (p. 1), or (this would be belied by his own admission (p. 13)) that my work 'correctly' identifies the Age of Consent Bill controversy (1891–2) as the high point of revivalist/reactionary movements.

The inclusion of Vivekananda in a work on Hindu revivalism to my mind does not necessarily collapse the important differences that always remained between him and certain arch-conservative figures and I dare say that perhaps my work was the first work in the English language that drew the attention of the academic world to such critical differences. At the same time, it is still my contention that if Vivekananda is today increasingly identified with a new Hindu-Fundamentalist resurgence, not all of it can be attributed to manipulative constructions. Somewhat contrary to what both Professors Nemai Sadhan Bose (Essay I) and Roychoudhuri say, there are certain ideas or suggestions in Vivekananda which consciously or unconsciously fed into the reactionary climate in late nineteenth century Bengal. This is an aspect which I have examined in some more detail in my forthcoming biography of Swami Vivekananda (OUP, Delhi).

It is a pity that Professor Roychaudhuri's essay on Vivekananda's 'construction' of Hinduism does not attempt a more critical appraisal of his religious thought. To me this is cause for some surprise as in his *Europe Reconsidered*, Roychaudhuri had identified, quite legitimately I think, the Hindu sanyasi in Vivekananda as the most dominant aspect of his personality. Perhaps it is this reluctance to seriously engage with these questions that has sometimes led Roychaudhuri to gloss over certain complexities. On page 2 for example, he suggests that Vivekananda 'unqualifiedly' accepted Maya and the Advaitic idea of the world being in illusion. Such a posture on the part of Vivekananda, if I may suggest would have seriously impinged on his activism and commitment to social service. It is actually on record that Vivekananda once sharply rebuked Mahendranath Gupta, the well-known chronicler of Sri Ramakrishna for suggesting that human efforts at improvement were meaningless given the 'illusive' nature of this world. That he also interpreted Maya somewhat differently is evident from an essay written by Govinda Chandra Dev, a philosopher from East Bengal and admirer of Vivekananda (also the subject of Essay 13 of this book).

Finally, there is the observation that Professor Roychaudhuri makes about the Ramakrishna Mission being more concerned with social service in general than with the education of the masses (p. 1). To this I can only say that after a stage, Vivekananda himself appears to have given up the idea of mass-education, possibly for practical reasons. Besides, it is important not to overlook the point that at one level, humanistic social service is less controversial than education which, more often than not, is linked to specific cultural needs of the community. This is a constraint which would have been particularly relevant for Vivekananda who, in respect of social and religious issues, followed 'the line of least resistance'.

In the following essay, Indira Chaudhuri-Sengupta presents a fairly detailed account of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago with particular reference to the delegates from India including Vivekananda. Its title, I fear, could be the source of some confusion for it puts 1892 and not 1893 as the date of the Parliament. The Parliament was indeed originally scheduled to open in 1892 but for certain reasons postponed to the following year. However, to maintain 1892 as the official date of the Parliament for that reason alone is, in my opinion, making too technical a point. Ms. Chaudhuri-Sengupta does also make the important point about how, rather than make a 'schematic presentation of Hinduism at the Parliament, Vivekananda presented it in 'universalistic terms', (p. 22, 26, 28). It is however well-known that this 'universalistic' presentation itself was bound by an essentializing paradigm of Vedanta (more specifically Advaita Vedanta). It also occurs to me that somewhat in the manner of Rammohun, Vivekananda made an important distinction between his projections of Indian religion within India and outside. In the West, by his own admission, he never especially propagated the personality or preachings of his spiritual guru, Ramakrishna. On his return to India, as Professor Roychaudhuri aptly points out, (p. 3), he did contribute to the ongoing effort to project Ramakrishna as an unique, avataric figure. This is a point which I think Ms. Chaudhuri-Sengupta herself tacitly makes in relation to Vivekananda's views on woman-related questions (p. 30f). While in the West, Vivekananda consistently denied ill-treatment of Hindu widows (p. 32), back home he is known to have contributed to the Widows Home at Barahnagar run by the Brahmo Sasipada Banerji. I think that on the whole, the conservative side to Vivekananda preferred the social rehabilitation of widows to the idea of widow marriages but here surely, he was only echoing a sentiment with which most 'reactionary'/'revivalist' figures of his day could be identified.

I have enjoyed reading the essay by Julius Lipner (Essay 4) especially as it renews academic interest in a relatively unknown but not unimportant figure Brahmabandhab Upadhyay. Essentially, this is a study of the transformation in Brahmabandhab's attitude towards Vedanta. As a Catholic Brahmabandhab began as a fierce critic of Vedantic pantheism, an attitude he shared with other Christian missionaries of his time (though I am given to understand that Advaita Vedanta is not quite pantheism). Subsequently however, he tried to integrate Advaitic postulates with a Christian world-view. This, we are told, was largely the result of influences coming from Vivekananda's joining Vedanta to the emerging nationalist discourse. However, as a man who lived until 1907 Bramabandhab would have been also influenced by the Swadeshi upsurge. Incidentally, he was also an ardent admirer of Sri Ramakrishna.

Dermot Killingley's "Vivekananda's Western message from the East" (Essay 7) is another essay I liked immensely. Killingley points out (p. 10), quite perceptively I thought, the tacit assumption made by Vivekananda about the intellectual history of the West also being the intellectual history of the nineteenth century. This is a point that connects with the observation made by Ms Chaudhuri-Sengupta (p. 34) about Indian discursive efforts being 'fixed by

. . . he suggests that Vivekananda 'unqualifiedly' accepted Maya and the Advaitic idea of the world being in illusion. Such a posture on the part of Vivekananda, if I may suggest would have seriously impinged on his activism and commitment to social service. It is actually on record that Vivekananda once sharply rebuked Mahendranath Gupta, the well-known chronicler of Sri Ramakrishna for suggesting that human efforts at improvement were meaningless given the 'illusive' nature of this world.

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Vivekananda was a very modern man but did not for that reason share the positivist view which somewhat naively saw 'modernisation' as linear and unending progression.

specific circumstances in a space that was colonially defined'. Of particular interest is Killingley's analysis of Paul Hacker's thesis attributing the moral philosophy of Vivekananda to influences from the German Vedantist, Paul Deussen. A similar analysis if I may point out, occurs in an earlier essay by William Halbfass 'Practical Vedanta' in Dalmia and Stietencorn (ed.) *Representing Hinduism*. Neither of them however appear to have consulted the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (or its English rendering) where there are some interesting references to Vivekananda's early response to Vedanta.

Essays 8 and 9 deal with two important themes of Vivekananda's attitude to 'seva' (social service) and to education respectively. Of these, the first is by Gwilym Beckerlegge who appears to have developed on an earlier (1986) essay on the same theme. The central argument of this essay, if I understand it correctly, is that neither the influences from Ramakrishna nor those from Western–Christian ethics are in themselves sufficient to explain Vivekananda's strong commitment to social service; an argument which rightfully restores the importance of Vivekananda's personal mediation in the matter. At places however, the discussion becomes too general and dilatory with the essayist also bringing in information relating to the Radhaswami Satsang, the Swaminarayan movement etc. The next essay by Vivienne Baumefield, one thought, could have similarly done without the details on the Company's education policy. There is an attempt here to compare Vivekananda's views on education with those found among other contemporary individuals and institutions like the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Spencer, Rabindranath and Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Surprisingly, there is not adequate reference to either Vidyasagar (whom Vivekananda greatly admired) or Satish Mukherjee and his National Education policy.

The following essay (Essay 10) by Glyn Richards entitled "Vivekananda and Essentialism" is a thoughtful analysis of certain postulates, especially those concerning Vivekananda's religious thinking. One extremely interesting point that Richards might have more forcefully made is that often essentializing tendencies too can be operatively quite tolerant (p. 213). Since Vivekananda believed all religions to be essentially one, this encouraged him, argues Richards, to encourage religious diversity so that ultimately, 'every man may have a religion unto himself' (p. 213). With regard to Advaita Vedanta, Richards also throws open the interesting question as to whether Vivekananda took this to constitute certain general universal principles or a historical religion or philosophy (p. 16). If, as Richards argues, Vivekananda's preference was for the former, it might have come into conflict with two aspects of his personality. Firstly, there is the argument that India was the seat of highest spirituality, which surely, Vivekananda wished to defend historically. That apart, there is his activism which, I imagine, would have made him ill at ease with entirely abstract ideas.

Kenneth Jones' comparative study of Vivekananda and two Sanatanist leaders from the Punjab, Shraddha Ram Phillauri and Din Dayalu Sharma (Essay II) only confirms his longstanding expertise on Punjab studies. Some of the conclusions in this essay however are debatable. While there are, no doubt, broad areas of agreement between these three figures, it appears too uncritical to suggest (as Jones does) that 'for them the rituals, beliefs, sacred texts and social structures of contemporary Hinduism were correct and divinely inspired' (p. 242). On the issue of sacred texts alone, the reader's attention is invited to some of Vivekananda's letters such as those written to Pramada Das Mitra that express anger and bafflement at the fact that the shastras speak with multiple voices. On page 227 furthermore, footnotes 15 and 16 seem to have changed places. What I nonetheless found interesting in the essay was that whereas 'Sanatanist' figures like and Phillauri and Sharma were familiar with Persian and even translated Christian polemical tracts into local languages, no such activities apparently can be associated with their rivals the Aryas or other reformist groups of the Punjab.

Hilturd Rustau's essay (Essay 13) on Swamiji's visions of ideal society and its impact on Govinda Chandra Dev is an interesting study of Vivekananda's legacy in Bengal. Dev (b. 1907) was a keen student of philosophy who also became the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission in erstwhile East Pakistan. He died in 1971, a victim of Pakistani genocide. It appears as though in this reconstruction, Rustau has not used all available writings of Govinda Chandra. I was also intrigued by the identification of Rammohun Roy with Vishsishtadvaita and Ramakrishna primarily with Advaita. From what little I know of these figures, the opposite appears to be the case.

The empirical richness and analytical excellence of the remaining essays in the book are beyond doubt. Those interested in the changing attitudes towards caste in colonial India will find Susan Bayly's essay (Essay 6) fascinating. Also concerned with caste movements but within a perceptibly different framework is the essay by Pinch which I personally found very interesting. This deals with the interesting social and ideological contestation that develops between two Vaishnava communities (Ramanujis and Ramanandis) in Gangetic upper India and subsequently spills over into Sanskritising movements among certain agrarian castes. What I particularly found interesting is Pinch's point disputing standard arguments relating to the 'Ramjanmabhumi' controversy to a colonial historiography alone. Rather than be understood in terms of Hindu-Muslim conflict, the need for a birthplace of Ram Pinch argues, may reflect new ideological needs emerging among upwardly mobile castes claiming Kshatriya status (p. 263). Nita Kumar (Essay 3) brings in her excellent knowledge of Benaras to produce a particularly useful study on Sanskrit Pandits and the modernisation of Sanskrit education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Vasudha Dalmia's essay (Essay 5) concerns the life and times of the major literary figure from the Hindi belt, Harish Chandra of Benares. Those who have had the occasion to read her recent book (and even earlier essays) will be only too familiar with the major arguments in this essay. What I did not comprehend as well was Dalmia's attempt to simultaneously invest the modernization of tradition with what appears to be mutually opposed qualities of 'legitimation' and 'improvement'. If, as Dalmia argues, Harish Chandra felt that the 'timeless' Hindu tradition could suitably adapt itself in keeping with emerging needs, then 'improvement' may not be the most appropriate expression to use. This, incidentally, is a point which Radice quite pertinently makes in relation to Vivekananda himself (p. ix). Vivekananda was a very modern man but did not for that reason share the positivist view which somewhat naively saw 'modernisation' as linear and unending progression.

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Seema Alavi

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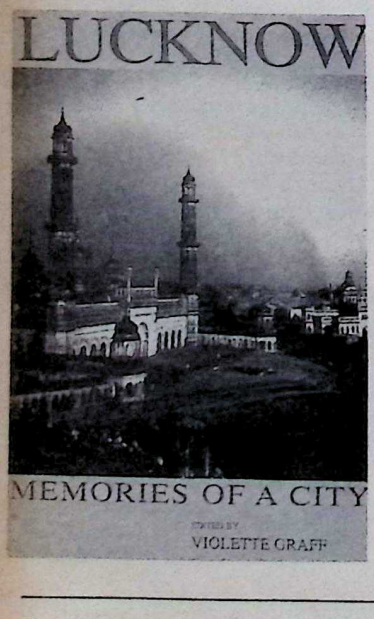
Manohar Books, 1997, pp. 242, Rs. 500.00

THE NABOBS: A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE ENGLISH IN 18TH CENTURY INDIA

Edited by Percival Spear

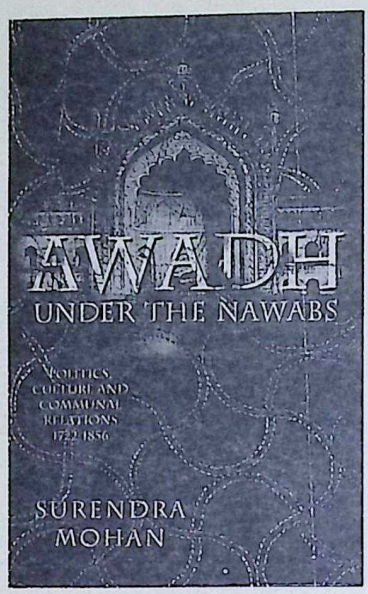
Oxford India Paperbacks, 1998, pp. 215, Rs. 195.00

Three books expressing intellectual concern at the "decay" of the "cosmopolitan" order of Awadh, modern day Uttar Pradesh, have appeared at a time when the syncretic culture of the region stands most threatened by the BJP-RSS government in the state. The academic interest with distinct political overtones is articulated most clearly in Violette Graff (Ed.), Lucknow: *Memories of A City*, and in S. Mohan, *Awadh Under the Nawabs: Politics, Culture and Communal Relations 1722–1856*, Percival Spear's book *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in 18th Century India*, engages with the issue tangentially by highlighting the resilience of social life in 18th century India which created space for the cultural accommodation of the Englishmen.



The coalescing of academic agendas with political concerns is always very heartening. But it is even more encouraging when retired IAS officers join the bandwagon of intellectuals and use their administrative experience and resources to provide significant and politically useful interpretations of our past. Surendra Mohan, a retired IAS officer of UP cadre, plays precisely this balming role. His book *Awadh Under the Nawabs* provides a novel interpretation of the popular Lucknow expression "pahley aap" which is the hallmark of the city's social etiquette. Mohan says that the expression connotes more than etiquette, "it has a deeper meaning: understand and respect the views of others, before putting across your own. It was a philosophy of co-existence. For a multi-racial society like we have in India nothing else will suit more than the idiom of *pahley aap. This is the basic ambience of Awadh*"

Mohan discusses the making of this accommodative Awadh ambience in an interesting chronological narrative that delves into the socio-cultural history of the region from 1722 to 1856. He gives a comprehensive overview of the region's literary, architectural and musical traditions as they evolved under the shadow of the English East India Company. He views the English Company as disruptive of the evolving



syncretic culture of the region. The Company's manouveres he argues were resisted by the region in 1857. In the "first war of independence" the cosmopolitan culture of Awadh was best exemplified as Hindus and Muslims fought together "on the plank of Hindustan being a nation entitled to have its own rulers."

Graff's book on Lucknow further explores the constituents of Lucknow's "syncretic" political culture. A set of 15 brilliantly researched essays discuss the strands that shaped the culture of the city as expressed in its arts, architecture, language and music. The essays of Muzaffar Alam and Mike Fisher provide a political backdrop for the subsequent articles which bring gender and colonialism centre stage to the culture studies agenda. Here, the insightful essays of Veena Oldenberg, and J.R.I. Cole on Lucknow courtesans and noblewomen respectively and that of Gail Minault on education of women in colonial Lucknow introduce the concept of gender in the making of the city's cultural identity. Oldenberg shows how in the *kothas* of cosmopolitan Lucknow, where religious identities remained submerged, the courtesans saw themselves as women first and constructed their sexuality fearlessly to ideologically challenge male patriarchy. The articulation of female sexuality in the *kothas* gave to the city its cultural distinctivity.

Again, some of the essays in the volume argue for a greater centrality of the colonial experience in the study of Lucknow's culture. The essays of Jean Marie Lafont on Europeans in Lucknow and that of Rosie Llewyn Jones on the European influences on Lucknow architecture appear to suggest an incorporative relationship between the region's culture and the colonial presence.

The essays of Mushirul Hasan, Francis Robinson and Peter Reeves look at how nationalist politics in colonial Lucknow intersected with its cosmopolitan culture, cut into its body and began to spill out its cultural referents. A process which was often manifested in Shia-Sunni sectarian clashes, communal skirmishes and caste conflicts. Violette Graff's article shows how the region coped with its politico-cultural legacy from 1977 to 1991. Together the essays on gender, colonialism and nationalist politics move beyond the religious identity categories and provide a far more nuanced and complex notion of Lucknow's "syncretic" culture.

Percival Spear's book though not located specifically in the Awadh region takes a more general look at the issue of regional cultural traditions in 18th century India which provided a space for the English sahibs to interact with indigenous society. In the process some Englishmen earned the epithet of Nabobs—oriental prince—in England. Spear provides detailed evidence from Calcutta, Madras, Surat and Bombay to argue that the significant transition of the English Company from a corporate entity in the 1750s to a political power in the 1760s left an indelible imprint both on Indian society as well as on the career graphs of Englishmen. He says that in this transition period "we get a rapid transformation from the purely commercial factor of the fifties to the merchant turned soldier or politician in the sixties and finally proclaiming himself gentleman". Among other things this development led to the urban growth of settlements like Calcutta. The new Nabobs built garden houses, town houses, magnificent buildings and indulged in animal hunts and fights as they were left free to interact with indigenous society to "know" the people and their politics. In these days of very little political control the Englishmen

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Collectively, these three fascinating volumes make a strong case for establishing interconnections between colonial studies, gender studies and nationalist politics in understanding the cultural underbelly of a region's colonial and post colonial experience.

dipped their fingers in corruption and amassed fortunes. Spear argues that the second transition of the English settlements was noticed in the 1780s when Lord Cornwallis initiated his efforts to anglicise indigenous society. This period of reforms culminated in the separation of Europeans from Indian society as a consequence of an official policy of racial discrimination, a missionary repugnance to the heathen practices and the development of "herd psychology" amongst the settlers as their numbers increased.

In their own different ways the books under review address the important question of what constitutes the regional cultures of India. While for Mohan its primary constituents are Hindu and Muslim religious communities with the English colonial powers located external to society, some of the essays in Graff's volume and Percival Spear present a more complex picture. They suggest that regional cultures were multilayered—each historical experience leaving its indelible imprint, the colonial encounter being no exception. Thus in the case of Awadh also by the early 19th century colonial powers managed to create cultural interphases with indigenous society: the English and European influence on art, architecture, education patterns and social ethics could not be ignored. Nor could the emergence of an indigenous service gentry class comprising scribes, accountants, merchants, *banias* cutting across religious boundaries be sidelined. [Rosie Llewyn Jones, Jean Marie Lafont and Gail Minault].

Given this more nuanced understanding of regional culture how does one address the issue of "syncretic" and/or cosmopolitan culture? While for Mohan the Hindu and Muslim harmonious co-existence and interaction in common cultural forums constitutes syncreticism, the contributors to the Graff volume suggest that perhaps a more incorporative and expansive definition of syncreticism which takes into account issues of gender and colonialism is desired. How then are we to understand the falling apart of this syncreticism? Was colonialism the only disruptive agency? Can we at all date the disintegration of the syncretic ethos of the region? That there are no simple answers to these questions is validated by the insightful essays of Mushirul Hasan on Shia-Sunni sectarian strife in colonial Lucknow, and Peter Reeves and Violette Graff on the trajectories of nationalist politics in the colonial and post-colonial period. These studies indicate that the transformation of Lucknow's syncretic culture followed different trajectories and was triggered by a variety of factors at different points of time: the politics of the Congress, the policies of the colonial state and later by the BJP and RSS combine. Collectively, these three fascinating volumes make a strong case for establishing interconnections between colonial studies, gender studies and nationalist politics in understanding the cultural underbelly of a region's colonial and post colonial experience.

Individually, both Mohan and Spear leave a lot of historiographical ground uncovered. Mohan does not engage in any meaningful way to the historiography of the 18th century regional formations. At best there is a diffidence to recognize and characterize the historical process resulting in the emergence of the regional political order of Awadh in the 18th century. Ironically, even though Mohan defiantly dismisses the phrase "state formation" to describe the emergence of Awadh Nawabi what follows in his subsequent chapters are fascinating details of the social and cultural reconfigurations leading to the emergence of a new polity. One wonders what alternate frame he has in mind to characterize these significant transitions of the 18th century.

Finally, Spear's understanding of the 18th century mindset also perhaps needs to be qualified in view of the recent monographs on the judicial and military sphere of the English Company's rule in India. For instance, the transition that he identifies from the oriental "nabobs" phase of the 1760s to the anglicising drives of Lord Cornwallis was not as neat and clear cut as he makes it out to be. Cornwallis' reforms were peppered by significant compromises with Hastings' brand of orientalism.

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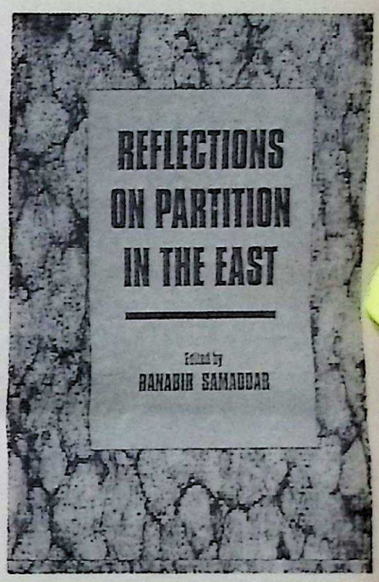
Losing the East, Losing Religion

Sunil Dasgupta

REFLECTIONS ON PARTITION IN THE EAST

Edited by Ranabir Samaddar

Vikas, New Delhi & Calcutta Research Group, 1997, pp. 215, Rs. 295.00



Along with the apocryphal tales of Gopal Bhar, my grandmother told me stories about the other side. 'Opar-ey,' she would say, her lips tightening and her eyes twinkling even through the thick after-cataract lenses, "we owned a hundred tanks full of fresh fish and land you couldn't walk across in a day, mango trees we never counted, and temples—two hundred of them—with their own puruts, every one of them. There was never anything we needed. That was our Bhuinya Bari." As a child growing up in North India, away from Bengal, where every grandmother had equally fantastic stories, I believed her far more than other refugee boys who had the reality check of the stories their friends heard. For three months a year during the holidays, my head would be filled with drastic plans of reclaiming my heritage, with force if necessary. (A swamiji from Bharat Sevashram Sangh, a revivalist Hindu monastic order popular in West Bengal, who visited every month for collections and whom I liked very much, told me how the order's monks slaughtered a train-full of Muslims in, as he described it, retaliation against the train-load of dead Hindus 'they' had sent from the other side.)

Until, of course, I saw *Buniyaad* on television. My grandmother's stories seemed as unnatural—how did she get the round figures of a hundred fish tanks and two hundred temples?—as the tall tales of this West Punjabi family uprooted by partition. Though the East had a high coincidence of class and religious divisions—Hindus were landowners and the Muslims peasants—there was no way every refugee family was as rich as they claimed. My Sikh friends in school, sons of farm-owning resettlers in the Terai, were more proud of their present than, perhaps, a poorer past. As I learnt more about the partition, however, an incongruity struck me. Why was the partition in the West so much more pervasive in popular history than the partition in the East? Why was Punjab on primetime television while Bengal remained forgotten? Hadn't Gandhi gone to Calcutta to stop the 'madness'? He didn't go to Amritsar. Wasn't Noakhali the worst of Hindu-Muslim rioting? Didn't we suffer more? Shouldn't we (the Bengalis) wear the badge of heroic stoicism that had been usurped by a pregnant-looking Deepa Sahi wrapped in a shawl?

If this sounds like the post-Holocaust bickering between Jewish groups competing to be the real victims, please bear with me. (I have hesitated in making this argument in public before because it does seem hypocritical to want to be a victim when I wasn't even there. And, wasn't the neglect of Bengal a Marxist clarion call? The political stick to beat the Center with as Bengalis axed the industrial base they had been sitting on for so long?) The secularism of modern India has celebrated the cross-communal culture. Punjabi Hindus and Muslims, it was popularly said, had more in common with each other

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than Punjabis and Tamilians, and yet the borders kept these brothers separated. It was a celebration of secular regionalism over religion. That was the Indian project. Fifty years later, we now know how superficial it was. Punjabi Hindu and Muslims might have more in common, but the 'madness' of Ayodhya was the true India. As disgusting as it sounds to me and to others who never gave religion a serious thought—after all, so many of us grew up going to chapel even though we were not Christians—India is driven by religion. It isn't India alone. Bosnia and Chechnya are obvious examples, but even the United States is driven by religion on key issues such as abortion, welfare, and school prayer.

As the celebration of secular regionalism marked India's first fifty years, the next fifty seem set for a celebration of religion over regionalism. This new Indian project—like the old secular one—might lead to the opposite consequences. Like Ayodhya was the result of years of secular constructivism, religious constructivism might release increased regionalism. The Tamil problem in Sri Lanka is one example of how this might happen. Instead of fighting for Hinduism, we might reassert our Bengali-ness, or luxuriate in our Punjabi-pan. Clearly, the Shiv Sena is forerunner of that trend, moving away from Hindu-to Marathi-chauvinism quite deliberately. Therefore, it become important, in my view, to understan the elements of regionalism that migh provide the faultlines for future conflic when everything from economi growth to cultural position will be de fined in regional terms—as religio does today. The only answer I hav found for the disproportionate pres ence of the western partition in popula history is a simple one: Punjab wa closer to the heart of India, to Delhi, t

On Sunday 20 May 1498, the Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama (1460?–1524) landed in Calicut (now Kozhikode). It was the beginning of Europe's colonization of Asia. 20 May 1998 is the 500th anniversary of this historic event.

Da Gama's voyage lasted 314 days. However, ten years before da Gama, Pero da Covilha had reached India by way of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Da Gama made two more voyages in 1502 and 1524, the last as the viceroy of Portuguese India. In 1510, Affonso de Albuquerque (1453–1515) seized Goa and established it as the power base of the Portuguese Empire in Asia. The poet, Luis Vaz de Camoes (1524?–80) spent fourteen years (1553–67) as a soldier in Goa. A distant cousin of da Gama, he celebrates his kinsman's historic voyage in *Lusiads* (1572), Portugal's national epic. Camoes' statue in old Goa in front of the Basilica of Bom Jesu, which contains the embalmed body of St. Francis Xavier (1506–52), the apostle of India, shows him with *The Lusiads* in one hand and a sword in the other. Portuguese rule in Goa ended as late as 1961.

Legend has it that the apostle Thomas (also known as the "Doubting Thomas") visited India soon after the crucifixion and died a martyr in north Madras. The hill where he was speared is known as St Thomas Mount (Parangimalai in Tamil). Camoes tells his story in the tenth canto of *The Lusiads*.

This year is also the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Rajasthani bhakti poet, Mirabhai (1498–1546)who was born near Merta a fortress-city about fifty miles northeast of Ajmer.

We carry below the poem "On the Quincentenary of the Landing of Vasco da Gama in Calicut, May 20, 1498" and a song (song 72 from part 2: "*ramaiya bin nind na avai*") translated from Mirabai's *Padavali*. One written and the other translated by R. Parthasarathy.

On the Quincentenary of the Landing of Vasco da Gama in Calicut, May 20, 1498

You who usurp the title of the messengers of God,
do you think you are following St. Thomas?
Luis Vaz de Camões, The Lusiads (1572)

1. *Affonso de Albuquerque*

The dark and threatening sea was now behind us.
Far from home we came upon land
not explored by the imagination.

rich in spices and precious metals.
In order to spread the faith among the heathen.
we spared neither mosque nor temple.

If any native dared to stand up to us,
we blew the poor bastard's head off.
In our quest for gold we left no city standing:

we burned entire villages for it.
Praise be to the Lord!
How else shall we inherit His kingdom?

2. *Luīs Vaz de Camões*

Gulls wrinkle the air.
The boat heaves, opens the river's eye
in the twinkling of a street.

The engine stops.
Houses drop into place. From the funnel
smoke balloons towards Ilhas.

You step out, and a carreira takes you
to the heart of Goa:
echo of immaculate bells

from hilltops flagged with pale crosses.
Under the sun's oppressive glare
he stands alone in a corner,

an unrepentant schoolboy,
book in hand,
spanning an empire.

from the Tagus to the China seas,
You stop to take a picture:
a storm of churches breaks about your eyes.

R. Parthasarathy

3. *How Can I Sleep Without Krishna?*

How can I sleep without Krishna?
Wrenched from his arms how can I survive?
I am driven back by the flames of love.
Without him my house is dark and unwelcome.
Of what use are lamps in his absence?
Not for me the pleasures of the bed:
I spend my nights sleepless.
Does any one know when my love will return?

The lightning thrashes about in the net of black clouds:
Frogs and waterbirds, cuckoos and peacocks
Call out to one another.
In vain I fight back the tears.
Tell me, friends, what shall I do? Where shall I go?

Like a venomous snake, his absence has bitten me:
I feel death in my bones.
Go, bring the herb at once.
Who among my friends will return with my love?

You stole her heart, Lord. When will you meet her?
When will you come to talk and laugh with Mira?

Mirabai *Translated from the Hindi by* R. Parthasarathy

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those who mattered. The Punjabi refugees came to Delhi and became bureaucrats, politicians, traders, and businessmen. The East Bengalis went to Calcutta and became trade union leaders, clerks, or remained underemployed. I picked up Ranabir Samaddar's edited volume, *Reflections on Partition in the East*, hoping for some answers for these imbalances in popular discourse. This is especially disconcerting because I believed there was a greater East-West balance in academic work on partition. The contributors are among modern Bengal's (West and East) cerebral heavyweights—historians, social scientists, writers, a well-known journalist. If there was an answer, it should have been here. However, the book does not even address the regional divide in the post-independence narrative of the partition. Apart from Subir Bhaumik's article on the Northeast and Samaddar's article on post-independence migration from East Bengal to the West, all the others might well have been written about Punjab and reached similar conclusions. (Subhoranjan Dasgupta's poor translation of partition-inspired Bengali poetry loses even the rootedness of the original language).

Partha Chatterjee's comparison of the two partitions of Bengal in 1905 (which was reversed in six years as a result of Congress pressure) and 1947 is more case-specific than the others. But even Chatterjee is looking primarily at the dynamics of Hindu-Muslim relationship, the construction of identity between two events and two communities. It is an analysis that could apply universally, not just to Punjab, but to the former Yugoslavia as well. Like Chatterjee, most of the authors in this volume are close to the subaltern school of historiography. They are influenced by Foucault's narrative and genealogical histories, and Edward Said's revenge-of-the-empire scholarship. Their project should not have been universalist. Instead, it should have celebrated the particular, the subaltern, the forgotten story of Bengal. While the act of writing the story of Bengal's partition is itself a subaltern expression—especially when the western partition has so completely dominated popular discourse—the failure to investigate the reasons for this differentiation undermines the effort.

Perhaps, a volume as quickly slapped together as this one cannot be all that it could be. And certainly, the scholarship, within the limits that it sets for itself, is noteworthy. Chatterjee revisits his work in the *Nation and Its Fragments* to reach the conclusion that religion was a critical factor in Bengal's second partition. That might seem an obvious statement considering that Pakistan was created as a Muslim state, but Chatterjee is contradicting the main thrust of post-independence constructivism undertaken by the Indian state and its Marxist collaborators in the academe. He shows that there was a popular and elite constituency for partition in 1946–47. Chatterjee also stands against the larger modernization-developmental theories that parallelize economic development and governance issues. The power of the modernization argument can be witnessed, as Chatterjee points out, in the fact that of hundred-odd new states that came into existence between 1945–1990, just two—Israel and Pakistan—were explicitly 'religious.' There were many more states where religion was a significant issue of identity, but belief in a God was not an expressed characteristic of citizenship. Obviously, Europe's enlightenment and secularism had visited the rest of the world. Though by no means new or as comprehensive as it should be, the most forward-looking work in the volume are Bhaumik's and Samaddar's. Bhaumik has covered the Northeast for years on behalf of the BBC. Some of the implications of Bhaumik's article are interesting. First, within the mainstream discourse on partition, we often miss the point that Pakistan and Assam were twins, born of the same process. If Muslims took advantage of British withdrawal to create a nation for themselves, however short-lived, it also gave the Assamese the chance to throw-off Bengali domination. Second, the process of partitioning would reiterate itself over the years creating the 'seven sisters' out of the single state of Assam. It is likely that this disintegrative process will continue further as the Kuki-Naga conflict becomes so acute that partition remains the only solution. The third point is the recognition of the fact that the government of free India, not unlike the 'capricious' British, has time and again used partition to resolve ethnic, linguistic, and religious issues. The irony of free India's policies and the hypocrisy of an official story that decries the British for partitioning India, however, is not even recognized in academic historiography, let alone incorporated in the popular narrative.

Samaddar's more comprehensive piece on the continuing flow of migrants from the East to West Bengal is illuminating. The fact that these are not Hindu refugees, but Muslims migrants looking for better lives makes it a political issue of explosive potential. To an extent, the BJP has played the card of illegal immigrants (same as the Republican Party scares Americans with visions of Mexican leeching and eventual takeover of the United States.) In present-day Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh illegal migration is the predominant political issue, surpassing even the calls for independence from India. Indian cities under migrant Muslim 'siege,' have become viciously right-wing. Bombay and Delhi are very good examples. Until recently, Calcutta (and West Bengal) had been a safe haven for Muslim migrants because they voted en masse for the secular Marxists. In the last elections, even discounting the Mamata-effect, the city (and the state) had moved towards the BJP.

I think it was Jairam Ramesh who, in a column years ago, pioneered the concept of EoK—East of Kanpur. If you drew a straight line south from Kanpur right through the middle of the Indian peninsula, Ramesh explained, you got two different countries. West of Kanpur was a booming country on the threshold of becoming an Asian tiger. EoK, on the other side, was a gigantic economic mess. Easterners have dealt with the reality of their Fourth World lives in the easiest possible way—by moving West. The migration from Bangladesh—a considerable number actually destined for Pakistan—fits this general pattern. Thousands of young Bengalis have moved to Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, anywhere, so that they could make a living. Would this be another cause for regionalism in the future? Would the Shiv Sena pioneer this political issue too?

Samaddar tries to maintain a certain sense of balance when he describes the rare move eastwards. West Bengali Muslims have often used Bangladesh's more generous visa quotas to go further west, to the Middle East, and even to New York. Though Samaddar does not mention this, a large number of India's garment exporters have moved East to use Bangladeshi quotas under the worldwide Multi-fiber Agreement to expand their business. I want to go East, but not forever. I want to see the Bhuinya Bari, my ancestral home, to find out if indeed there is some truth in my grandmother's stories. But Qais Ahmed's story in the book of his visit to the ancestral home of the famous Bengali writer Manik Bandopadhyay is an effective dissuader. It is a classic tale of migration and abandonment, almost Manto-like in its narrative, that will resonate in Punjab and everywhere else where politics has divided peoples. It gives us nostalgia and reality, the split between memory and migration that provides the grist for refugee stories. Pradip Kumar Bose's exploration of memory and history verges on the trite but is nonetheless useful because the truth about the partition, despite the many embellishments, is carried by people like my grandmother, and passed down to their grandchildren. In conjunction with Sandip Bandopadhyay's exploration of the selective memories of the Bengali Hindus (a phenomenon that would have paralleled the Sikh/Hindu experience in Punjab) it provides, when extrapolated to the present, some of the fundamental reasons for Hindu revivalism. *Tamas* and *Buniyaad* actually feed into the official Indian story about the futility and the tragedy of partition. They are narratives that refuse to recognize the constituency for partition. My grandmother's stories are more true because she says she fled Muslim persecution. The swamiji's story is more true because the monks did take their swords to thousands of Muslims throats just as the Nihangs did in Punjab. In the end, and irrespective of the lies about land and property, irrespective of the suffering, there is a recognition of religion as the basic fact of partition, of subcontinental life. Unlike the official version, this is not a pretty picture of ourselves. It is hideous, ugly, but that is what we are. It is not only hypocritical to pretend otherwise, but also politically explosive. The sooner we confront our demons, the quicker we will exorcise them.

Perhaps, a volume as quickly slapped together as this one cannot be all that it could be. And certainly, the scholarship, within the limits that it sets for itself, is noteworthy. Chatterjee revisits his work in the* Nation and Its Fragments *to reach the conclusion that religion was a critical factor in Bengal's second partition. That might seem an obvious statement considering that Pakistan was created as a Muslim state, but Chatterjee is contradicting the main thrust of post-independence constructivism undertaken by the Indian state and its Marxist collaborators in the academe.

Sunil Dasgupta is currently working for a Ph.D. in the Department of Political Science, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, Champaign.

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On Redefining Development Economics

C.P. Chandrasekhar

ANALYTICAL DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS: THE LESS DEVELOPED ECONOMY REVISITED

By Kaushik Basu

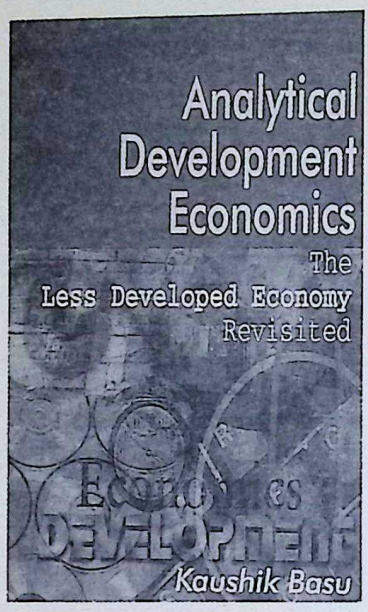
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. xix+366, Rs. 495.00

Till quite recently, 'neoclassical' development economists treated the problems of the poorest nations of the world as being a special instance of the consequences of the deviation of real economies from the 'ideal' benchmark of a perfectly competitive, Walrasian economy. Intervention by post-colonial governments seeking to accelerate the growth of per capita incomes, it was argued, generated distortions or deviations from a competitive framework that resulted in a misallocation of scarce resources and bred inefficiency. The resulting loss of surplus, which it was presumed is always automatically invested, results in lower growth in these economies, condemning them to backwardness. It is this perspective, backed by the international financial institutions, that won for itself the title of mainstream development economics.

During the years when this 'marketist' perspective rose to dominance in the practice of development economics, much was happening within neoclassical theory itself. Microeconomic theory was, according to some, being transformed by a 'revolution' involving "the abandonment of the simple world of Walrasian general equilibrium in favour of a richer world of imperfect information, incomplete markets, unenforceable contracts, costly transactions, and strategic interaction". There has also been a revival of interest in growth theory, triggered by the efforts to endogenize a wider range of variables that were not accommodated in the early growth models.

The book under review, which is a revised and extended version of the author's *The Less Developed Economy: A Critique of Contemporary Theory*, is an attempt to use these new developments in theory to 'formalize' some of the propositions of traditional development economics, as well as to elucidate and extend recent contributions informed by the new developments in neoclassical theory. The result is a lucidly written, often deceptively simple, tract that comprehensively surveys and at times advances what has been described by economists of a neoclassical persuasion as a revival in development theory.

Given its subject matter, which is circumscribed by the specific problems that are seen as being amenable to analysis with the tools of the new, neoclassical economics, Kaushik Basu's book is an eclectic tour of various 'issues' drawn either from the staple of traditional development economics or from empirical experience. The issues dealt with vary from 'macro' ones like the vicious circle doctrine, the determinants of inflation and unemployment and the external debt problem, to more specific puzzles, especially in the agricultural sector, which are amenable to analysis with the tools at hand. With evidence of interlinked (land, labour, credit and product) markets and of an inverse relationship between size and productivity having provided many such puzzles, it is not surprising that an analysis of the 'Rural Economy', which indeed is the backbone of developing economies, occupies a third of the manuscript. The final result is a book which not merely provides an extremely useful survey of the new, neoclassical development economics for students of the subject, but also serves as a knowledgeable guide to researchers seeking to make use of or critically engage with what is definitely a far more serious effort on the part of neoclassical economists to come to terms with the special problems of developing countries.



There are many insights which derive from the new neoclassical development economics, even for those not too comfortable with the assumptions and framework of its analysis. For example, even if the analysis of why international bankers lend to developing countries and why the latter choose to borrow which is based on the maximization of a set of inadequately specified (but well behaved) utility functions may not appeal to many, the discussion does yield interesting insights into the determinants of the herd-instinct that characterizes lenders and triggers financial crises in developing countries, or into the widely observed problem of loan-pushing. There are other areas such as the argument on the vicious circle, where Basu's use of equilibrium analysis helps elucidate the conditions under which such an argument can be feasibly held. Above all, there are occasions such as the analysis of 'structural inflation' and its relationship with Kalecki's non-neoclassical framework of mark-up pricing, when Basu steps beyond his chosen 'subject', to provide a useful survey. It is, however, unfortunate that the discussion on inflation in developing country contexts ends with the blanket judgement that for a fuller explanation we need not just structuralism, but, its opposite, monetarism, as well. An unacceptable marriage of that kind is hardly convincing, and Basu's case may have been better served by focussing on the ways (such as the effects on commodity speculation of a liquidity overhang) in which money does matter.

This tendency to treat what are traditionally considered 'theoretical opposites' in terms that are both mutually compatible and equally relevant in explaining real-world phenomena and in seeking new policy directions, has a more basic origin. In Basu's view, it is one of the outcomes of the emergence of the new, neoclassical development economics, which is not just a direct and 'natural' descendant of traditional development economics, but is in fact a substantial development of the latter. The new development economics has, according to him, two advantages. First, unlike the traditional development economics, which raised innumerable questions and had answers for very few, 'recent development economics' sets itself more realistic targets. Thus, an eclectic choice of issues is viewed as a virtue rather than a limitation of the method of analysis. Second, through the increasing use of rigorous analysis, the 'new development economics' is seen as blurring the distinction between development economics and theory, so that the former is no longer "practised in the periphery". The second of these arguments once again attempts to advance the view that any system of theory that dominates the debate at a particular point in time in the centres of world capitalism is both correct and needs to be integrated. To many concerned with the persisting subjugation in less visible forms of the developing countries by the developed centres of world capitalism, one of the virtues of the traditional development economics is the fact that it refused to integrate with the mainstream theory at the centre, on the grounds that it was a part of the ideological baggage that legitimized international hegemony. So there would be many, at least within the borders of the less-developed world, who may not share Basu's enthusiasm for integration.

Perhaps to strengthen his case, Basu extends his argument on the nature and role of theory even further. According to him, economic theory is a 'single,' neutral set of rigorous techniques which enhances the analysis of

Given its subject matter, which is circumscribed by the specific problems that are seen as being amenable to analysis with the tools of the new, neoclassical economics, Kaushik Basu's book is an eclectic tour of various 'issues' drawn either from the staple of traditional development economics or from empirical experience.

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The inability of mainstream theory to understand the laws of accumulation and growth in the specific structural context of the developing countries does not mean that there are no efforts outside mainstream theory that have made a contribution to the field or that growth is not the central issue in development economics.

any problem at hand. Further, resorting to a marriage between the current version of mainstream theory and issues in development, does not dissociate the main concerns of the 'new development economics' from that which has ostensibly been practised in the periphery.

On both these counts, Basu is quite candid. First, in a return to the questionable (and much questioned) distinction between 'positive' and 'normative' economics, he suggests that "conflicts between different schools of thought are often necessarily heightened because of our tendency to read into analyses prescriptions that are not there". New developments in theory appear to merely deliver a set of results. How we interpret them and draw prescriptive conclusions lies beyond the immediate pale of economics. For example, he believes that the neoclassical claim that workers are paid their marginal product, which can be disputed only on empirical grounds, is objected to by those of a different persuasion on the grounds that it presumes that "workers get what they deserve". The possibility that underlying that claim is a theory of distribution which conflicts with the theories held by those of a different persuasion, does not figure at all. Such reasoning obviously allows Basu to draw the conclusion that "there is greater harmony than is apparent in the diverse strains of thought that have gone into the analysis of underdevelopment".

Second, while admitting that the new development economics is less concerned with the process of development than with "the problems and structure of underdevelopment", Basu argues that this is not because long-run growth is not "very important", but because "we still do not understand its mechanics very well". This comes through in the discussion on 'Growth and Development', which is more a useful survey of elements of theory in the area, than a discussion of relevance to the special problems of developing countries. The inability of mainstream theory to understand the laws of accumulation and growth in the specific structural context of the developing countries does not mean that there are no efforts outside mainstream theory that have made a contribution to the field or that growth is not the central issue in development economics. To those who adhere to traditions derived from Smith, Ricardo and Marx and for the followers of Schumpeter, such a characterization would neither be fully acceptable nor would it be ground enough for shifting the focus of development economics away from its original project.

Traditionally, the point of departure for development economics was the striking economic distance between rich and poor nations. This sub-field within economics as a discipline was concerned with explaining this distance, analyzing its consequences for growth and well-being within the less-developed countries, and examining the possibility, under alternative regimes, of it being bridged. Seen in this light, Nurkse's emphasis on the possibilities of using surplus rural labour as a means of raising the rate of accumulation and growth without running up against the wage goods constraint, was a far more significant contribution to the discipline than concepts such as the vicious circle or balanced growth. Central to development economics, therefore, is an analysis of the structural and other features of the typical less-developed economy which favoured or militated against growth. Based on such an analysis, economists of both liberal and radical persuasions identified the emergence and persistence, if not reproduction, of backwardness, as being the consequence of structures, within the developing countries themselves and in the world economic system, created in the course of integration of the present-day backward economies into the world capitalist system, most often under colonial regimes. The failure of these economies to 'catch up' was, therefore, traced to their inability to reshape these structures, or at least overcome the debilitating consequences of some of them. Given this dynamic and structural core of the subject, 'neoclassical' descendants of the marginalist revolution in economics, who were concerned more with static allocation problems than with growth, till recently had little to contribute to the subject. It was not the failure of development economics to integrate that left it in the 'periphery', but the inability of mainstream theory to accommodate its concerns.

Does the willingness of the new development economics to 'sacrifice' growth questions also stem from a similar inability, which forces it to divert the focus of concern away from the central issues of development to more microeconomic issues analysed in a dominantly static framework? Whatever Basu's answer may be, the argument remains that the 'new development economics' is not carrying forward in a new and rigorous fashion the concerns of the 'traditional development economics", but changing the focus of what is termed development economics. That, however, does not undermine its importance as an attempt by the theoretically more honest mainstream economists to make a foray into problems which, even if not always specific to the less developed countries, are more preponderant in such contexts. The issue to be confronted is whether the framework of analysis adopted limits the scope of that effort. And the danger to be avoided is that in the name of setting realistic targets that effort is aborted.

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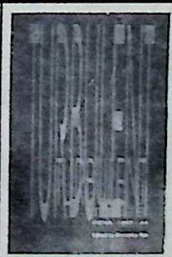

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A Grandstand View of Economic History

Ashok V. Desai

COLONIALISM, PROPERTY AND THE STATE

By Dharma Kumar

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. viii+383, Rs. 595.00

Professor Dharma Kumar recently completed a long innings as professor of economic history at Delhi School of Economics; her stint as editor of the *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, which she founded, still continues. These positions have given her a grandstand view of Indian economic history for over three decades. The present book is a collection of essays she has written since 1981—11 published or presented in seminars, four unpublished—and covers the wide canvas of her interests.

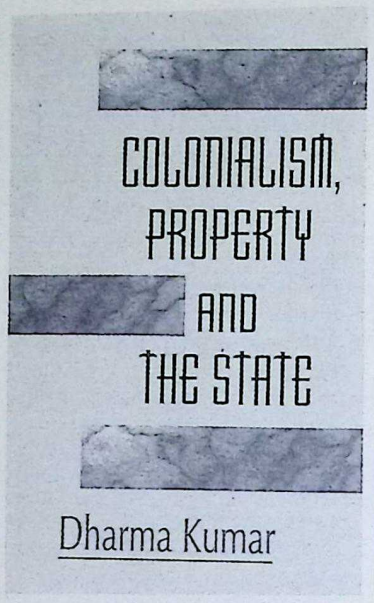
They are divided into five parts. First come two papers on the Madras Presidency, on which Kumar wrote her Ph.D. thesis and in which she has maintained an interest. Next there are four papers on issues related to land. Five papers that follow compare regional and national economies. Then come three papers related to her original research papers on British India. The collection is rounded up by an assault on left secularist historians.

In the paper on "Land Ownership and Inequality in Madras Presidency, 1853–1947" Kumar takes up districtwise data on the size of holdings and the size of pattas (i.e., of land held by a single owner for the purpose of paying land revenue), and fits Lorenz curves to them. The distributions became more equal in some districts and less in others; for the entire presidency they changed little. Kumar uses this evidence to throw doubt on the view that inequality must have increased under the colonial government. The evidence is, as she points out, not conclusive; evidence on holdings tells us nothing about the ownership pattern since an owner can own a number of plots, and records of pattas were inaccurate because owners often failed to get transfers recorded. Still, Kumar eliminates a major possible source of evidence for growing inequality.

In the paper on "The Forgotten Sector" Kumar investigates services in Madras Presidency in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first census was held in 1872. Before that there are only the statistical collections of that remarkable traveller, Francis Buchanan, also known as Hamilton, which have attracted the labours of many recent historians. Buchanan published A *Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* in 1801. He would go into a village, call the headman and get him to collect a few villagers; his data was obtained from enquiries addressed to this select crowd through interpreters. The results are quaint; they give rare insight into the precolonial, preindustrial society. Thus one of the numerous village officials was a *tarugaru* or *udaca* who would "bustle among the farmers and call them to work." This is not fiction; I have myself been to villages in Bihar in 1966 where villagers were hauled out of their huts and hustled to work in the landlord's fields. There were few lawyers, but many doctors; one village had an eye doctor as well as a pediatrician. There were actors, storytellers, clowns, rope and snake dancers, jugglers, conjurers, singers and temple dancers. This is not very solid history, but nevertheless fascinating.

The paper on "Land Fragmentation" starts with a well established fact that Indian farmers typically hold land in multiple fragments; economists consider it axiomatic that consolidation of

Kumar's attack on Left secularist historians is especially ironic, since she is defiantly secular, and an atheist. But she disagrees with the omnibus Left secularist thesis that Hindus and Muslims lived in harmony till the British came and made them colonial, and that Hindu communalism is today's foremost danger.



holdings would raise the productivity of land as well as labour. Fragmentation is supposed to be related to population pressure, but it also enables farmers to spread risks by owning a number of varieties of land. Kumar surveys some variants and alternatives to fragmentation prevalent in Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka before coming to two hypotheses: that consolidation is prevented because villagers have imperfect information about the quality of others' holdings, and because they hold land as a saleable asset, and not just a means of livelihood.

There are three papers on the concept of property in land. Poor countries display a considerable variety of types of land ownership as well as of usufructuary rights. The confusion multiplies when one goes into history. Kumar goes into some detail on the complex relationships in the Chola kingdom, which obtained in southern India between 850 and 1280, between land, the king, holders of usufructuary rights, communal assemblies, and large landholders—who could justly be called owners, except that modern law of property did not exist then. On this, Kumar's conclusions are understandably tentative: it goes little beyond the assertion that the law that ruled was not the law of the jungle.

It has been the contention of the Aligarh school that the Mughals collected a very high proportion—close to a half of farm output in taxes. There is evidence that the British Indian government collected much less—3.5 per cent of gross agricultural output—in the first half of this century (p. 219). One of two things must be true. Either the British drastically reduced the tax rates, either on taking over or later. Or the Aligarh school is wrong about the actual share of taxes in farm output in Mughal times. Kumar believes the latter, and puts it forward in a number of contexts. It occurs in a comparison of the colonial regimes in India and Indonesia, and again later in a discussion of whether the British colonial government was a "predatory state". This is part of a broader polemic against left secularist historians, to whom Kumar devotes her last paper. She attributes to them the view that pre-British India was "secular"—that in practice, Hindus and Muslims coexisted in amity and that the British introduced communal conflict to divide their subjects. Thus taken together, Kumar is engaged in a war with Left secularists on several fronts.

Such extensive wars are seldom decisively won on all fronts, least of all by a lone warrior like Kumar. On some of the issues, Kumar has borrowed rather damp ammunition. Thus, for instance, Kumar cites some historians who have estimated lower figures of Mughal agricultural taxation than Aligarh taxation. This question cannot be settled by setting one historian's estimate against another. The textual evidence is in favour of the Aligarh school; Kumar believes that Mughal texts exaggerate the tax collections. The way to get better answers would be to collect figures of actual revenue collections, and relate them to estimates of agricultural output. The latter estimates are the key. On the basis of Abul Fazal's figures in the *Ain-e-Akbari*, I had shown, in IESHR 1968 that yields in Akbar's India were considerably higher than yields in 1961–62. The Aligarh school found this inconvenient; Shireen Moosvi wrote an entire Ph.D. dissertation to prove me wrong. But her proof was simply that my estimates were implausible and must be scaled down, which she arbitrarily proceeded to do. I gave reasons why yields were higher; namely that land under cultivation was a fraction of what it is now and hence comparable to the best land under cultivation now, and that owing to the greater extent of forests and vegetation, the supply of water to crops over the growing season was better. If the yields were substantially higher in Mughal India, a higher proportion of taxes to output was also feasible. However, Kumar either forgot my estimates or did not believe them, and thus missed a way of coming to terms with the Aligarh school. Reality is seldom so simple as historians make it. No doubt some farmers—for instance those located in the fertile north Indian valleys, close to the rulers' capitals—paid high taxes most of the time; others further away probably paid taxes less regularly or frequently, and received periodic punishment in the form of raids by imperial forces. Still others, who

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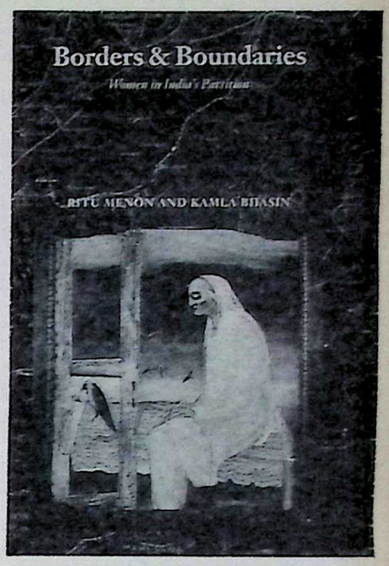
Sir, Our Country has a Tradition*

Vasanth Kannabiran

BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES: WOMEN IN INDIA'S PARTITION

By Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin

Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 274, Rs. 300.00



Overriding all these was a violence that was horrifying in its intensity, one which knew no boundaries; for many women it was not only miscreants, outsiders or marauding mobs they needed to fear—husbands, fathers, brothers and even sons could turn killers. That terrible stunning violence and the silencing pall that descended like a shroud over it have always just hovered at the edges of history; breaking the silence has exposed not only the cracks in family mythologies about honour and sacrifice, but the implicit consensus that prevails around permissible violence against women during periods of highly charged communal conflict.

Rarely does one comes across a book that is difficult indeed to read, (lines that grip your gut and rock your very being with a nausea that threatens to erupt of molten anger and fear) and is also difficult to put down as you grapple with the meaning of family, community and state for women sifting ideas and insights which surface from the sense of pain and betrayal that clots the history of women. What has freedom meant for women? What does it mean today? And how does one map the contours of the skewed relationship women bear to nationality and citizenship? Of women's role when ethnic, communal or national identities are rearbitrated? Menon and Bhasin search precisely these meanings in their significant history of women in India's partition. And as we follow them through the maze of historical facts, feelings of betrayal and calm resignation that fill the intense pages of this book, we begin to understand as the authors put it how women's histories interrogate not only the histories we know but how we know them.

Initially conceived as a three country oral history of women's experience of partition in 1947, *Borders and Boundaries* looks at the question of belonging and how it polarizes choice and allegiance for women. From this history that leaves the reader aghast at how simply women can be dispensed with six themes emerge: violence; abduction and recovery; widowhood; rehabilitation; rebuilding and belonging. And each chapter unravels the relationships between women, religious community and the state within and across nations, between women and family; between women and their men and women and their country. And in the course of this unravelling *The figure of the abducted woman became symbolic of crossing borders, of violating social, cultural and political boundaries.*

Looking at the women who were abducted and the meaning of abduction and recovery one realizes the material, symbolic and political significance of abduction in free India. The restoration of Hindu women was the bringing home of Sita—a moral duty inherited by the descendants of Ram. And inevitably followed by the burning alive of Sita. A tradition of our country.

The history throws up the bizarre fact that what happens to women in moments of rupture and dislocation is the other side of what happens to them in periods of calm. And the fact that the violence in times of conflict is part of a continuum and a consensus that encompasses this violence. A consensus which while sanctioning a violent resolution of women's sexuality simultaneously insists on women's silence regarding it.

In the first chapter "Speaking for Themselves" Menon and Bhasin raise the problem of disentangling women's experiences from those of other political non-actors so as to problematize the general experience of violence, dislocation and displacement from a gender perspective.

All life lines are broken at some point or another. Personal tragedy, an irreparable loss, a natural disaster or cataclysmic historical moment shape lives in ways that are forever marked by that event. Our concern in speaking to women about how they experience the Partition of India was two-fold: first, to see how the lives of those who are non-actors in the political realm are shaped by an epochal event, and how their experience of it enables a critique of political history and the means of writing it differently. Second, to study a time marked by massive disruption and crises through life-stories that would, both, bear witness and allow us to attempt a gendered social history.

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* *Shibban Lal Saksena, Constituent Assembly Debates.*

This book is excellent, sometimes very witty polemics: it takes up a series of "establishment" positions and pummels them energetically. One cannot help the feeling sometimes that Kumar's artillery is not particularly heavy; sometimes she reuses spent cartridges.

farmed less fertile areas, were perhaps incapable of paying high taxes and lived an uncertain, nomadic life. More remote ones were probably little bothered by the rulers. The overall share of taxes could have been lower than the rate legally levied, and higher than the share in late British times. As land productivity fell and the British government brought wider areas under taxation, the share could have fallen over time. Historians try to freeze this heterogeneous, shifting reality into a rigid model. They find students to teach such models to, and employ them as assistant teachers and researchers to create a school. Then others come with contrary evidence and destroy the school. This interplay has more to do with the way history is done than with the underlying reality.

Kumar's attack on Left secularist historians is especially ironic, since she is defiantly secular, and an atheist. But she disagrees with the omnibus Left secularist thesis that Hindus and Muslims lived in harmony till the British came and made them colonial, and that Hindu communalism is today's foremost danger. While attacking it she assails a number of ancillary positions that irritate her: for instance that Buddhism was ruthlessly extirpated from India, that Hinduism is divisive, racist and inegalitarian, or that scheduled castes are not really Hindu. After these skirmishes in the foothills she attacks the peaks with great verve.

This book is excellent, sometimes very witty polemics: it takes up a series of "establishment" positions and pummels them energetically. One cannot help the feeling sometimes that Kumar's artillery is not particularly heavy; sometimes she reuses spent cartridges—for instance, the repeated quotation from Elizabeth Colson about people preferring colonial law and order to disorder. But for all that, a highly readable book.

Ashok V. Desai is an economist currently with the Business Standard.

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The sanctity of hearth and home, community and nation depends on the stern defense of women's bodies, a defence which includes the right to destroy these offending bodies. And abducted women were not perceived or defined as citizens but as missing members of religious and cultural community to be restored to the community regardless of choices.

Using a combination of commentary and analysis, narrative and testimony the authors counterpoint documented history with personal testimony. A juxtaposition which calls into question the telling of history itself and imbuing this knowledge with experience fosters the understanding that meanings are never settled. At least not meanings that centre around women's lives. Looking at the women who were abducted and the meaning of abduction and recovery one realizes the material, symbolic and political significance of abduction in free India. The restoration of Hindu women was the bringing home of Sita—a moral duty inherited by the descendants of Ram. And inevitably followed by the burning alive of Sita. A tradition of our country. A collective memory that made the recovering of women a sacred responsibility. And one that sanctioned the use of force if Sita dared to be secular, dared to differ from her protector and rescuer.

Are women ever allowed free choice? A choice that is freely exercised? Can secularity be contaminated by sexuality? These are questions that rise up before us as we see instance after instance of women being physically cut away from the offending but functional arrangements that had been entered and relocated within a "real" family and community where her sexuality could be properly supervised. And the role of the state as father-patriarch reinforcing official kinship relations becomes clearer. And we see clearly how critical women are as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups. The sanctity of hearth and home, community and nation depends on the stern defense of women's bodies, a defence which includes the right to destroy these offending bodies. And abducted women were not perceived or defined as citizens but as missing members of religious and cultural community to be restored to the community regardless of choices. Or to be locked out of offending sight when the community would not accept them. And so while women were unwanted they still had to be "rescued" and recovered.

Dealing with the scale of widowhood in 1947–48 the state was forced to shoulder the social and economic responsibility for "unattached" women—the widows. And the significance of this move in terms of the state was that it had a dual function of custodian and guardian of the women and of a benign agency that would not subscribe to or reinforce the strong traditional biases against women. As widows are assumed to be sexually inactive, while the fear of sexual exploitation was *implicit* there was a need to liberate them from the cultural stigma of widowhood and resurrect them as *economic* beings and part of the mainstream of national life. With widows the issue of citizenship which is so contorted in the case of abducted women becomes far simpler. Widows could simply be defined as victims of a national disaster to be rehabilitated as citizens in their own community. And one sees clearly the often contradictory relation between women and the state which is sometimes cooperative on issues of welfare and conflictual on issues of rights.

As one enters deeper into this world of borders and boundaries question after question surfaces to haunt and torture us like the women who people the book. And the emotion it rouses is not for a distant past, not a gentle sorrow or great grief for women who have suffered and gone or linger. It is concern that is essentially selfish and focussed at our own existence as women, as citizens and members of a community. Each moment documented in the book reverberates right through these fifty years into the present. And the echoes of the answers to these questions come back to us from the act of establishing borders and restoring "order" across the length and breadth of the world inspiring on our survival.

Particularly relevant today is the whole issue of women's citizenship and the consistency with which women's fundamental rights are swiftly subsumed by culture and community. And whether we can continue to allow the identity of a religious and ethnic community to subordinate all other identities—whether gender, class, caste or region. It is these questions that *Borders and Boundaries* insists on our confronting and the failure to do so can erode a lot of spaces we as women have struggled over the years to gain.

Vasanth Kannabiran is a feminist activist and writer based in Secundarabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Engendering Childhood

Nandini Chandra

LOVED AND UNLOVED: THE GIRL CHILD IN THE FAMILY
Edited by Jasodhara Bagchi, Jaba Guha and Piyali Sengupta
Stree Publications, Calcutta, 1977, p. 212, Rs. 250.00

The book as the title suggests is about the precarious existence of the girl child in the family. That is why perhaps, it is dedicated to the girl child of the 'future' whose condition it is hoped would no longer be as endangered. According to the authors of the book, the fact that the girl child remains a drudge, is kept illiterate, fed inadequately and married off early in order to maintain the family status as well as to provide for its future shows that even after fifty years of Independence, 'the natural claim to childhood for most of our girl children' is not guaranteed. Implicit in this is the agenda that the girl child, having been so far denied childhood should be given the status of a child. In other words then, as the subject in question doesn't enjoy the status of a child, the term 'girl child' is a contradiction.

Even as an attempt is made to understand the term historically, the authors fail to clarify exactly what is desired for their so-called girl child, to discuss the contradictions thrown by it or to even problematize it in the first place. Apparently drawn from 19th century reformist debates, its legacy goes back to the 'shishukanya' who emerged in the middle-class consciousness of Bengal as the main victim of barbaric social practices like female infanticide, child marriage and sati. While these debates recast the identity of the newly emerging middle-class women as an icon of the authentic Indian tradition, a social space is simultaneously created to accommodate the girl child. According to Bagchi, "the middle-class construct of the girl child as 'khukumani' meant that she must be both liberated as a child and committed to the domestic virtues for which her life was a long preparation." It wasn't as if she was brought up on a principle of equality with the 'khokababu' or boy child. What was emphasized instead was a feminine code of dressing up games and stories suitable for would-be *bhadramahilas*. Since the 70s, the UN years of the Family and Women and the 90s, the SAARC decade of the Girl Child, the term has gained widespread popularity. To that extent, the term is more of a wish and a political agenda than an accurate description of the present status of girls, at least as far as the data given in the book is to go by. 'Let the girl also be a child'. The wish one'd think is for a more equal sharing of privileges on the one hand and a minimalizing of divisions based on gender on the other. In short for a childhood as much engendered as ungendered. Instead, the unquestioning use of the term here seems to imply that childhood is a natural state. However, unlike infanthood, childhood is

The introduction by Jasodhara Bagchi begins by questioning the very premise of this book, i.e., Why does this book speak of the girl and not of the child, whether boy or girl? But the question proves to be a rhetorical one and it is not really addressed beyond a reference to the ill-fed, ill-clad boys who work in the innumerable tea stalls, canteens and small, dingy karkhanas that litter the slums of Calcutta. Add to this category the regular domestic help, the dalit, the various victims of sexual abuse and the case of discrimination against boys is equally strong.

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The book is part of the national project on the Girl Child and the Family sponsored by the Indian Government that was carried out by the 22 women's studies centres, located in different regions. A survey based, collaborative, research-cum-action project, it aims to generate comparative data on the condition of the girl child that would help to improve planning and implementation of programmes.

not a biological given. It is recognized more as a set of rights and privileges for a certain age group deriving from a liberal ideology than an inborn trait. According to Phillipe Aries (*Centuries of Childhood*), childhood is a 19th century European invention that accompanied the rise of the bourgeois family. For example, in the middle ages children were treated as mini adults. In a Hindu context, Sudhir Kakar's seminal study on childhood (*Inner World*) reveals that unlike in the West, the child here was protected, indulged in and nurtured for a long time. But he also adds that this omnibus reference to the child excludes most girls generally and boys from the lower caste. In a historic sense then, it would be more appropriate to have the suffix 'child' after boys, to emphasize their differentiated and rather special status.

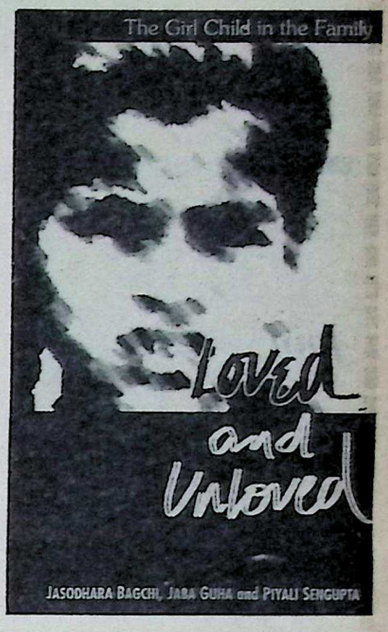
The introduction by Jasodhara Bagchi begins by questioning the very premise of this book, i.e., Why does this book speak of the girl and not of the child, whether boy or girl? But the question proves to be a rhetorical one and it is not really addressed beyond a reference to the ill-fed, ill-clad boys who work in the innumerable tea stalls, canteens and small, dingy *karkhanas* that litter the slums of Calcutta. Add to this category the regular domestic help, the dalit, the various victims of sexual abuse and the case of discrimination against boys is equally strong. This still doesn't do away with the systematic discrimination against girls practised right since birth defying the categories of class, caste, religion and the entire gamut of social practises that naturalize this deprivation. Thus the attempt here is to show the girl's place in the family, which traditionally has been viewed as a nurturing and protective institution. The book breaks this myth and highlights 'the retrogressive forces that operate within and outside the family restricting the opportunities and choices open to the girl child (and hence to the woman)'.

The book is part of the national project on the Girl Child and the Family sponsored by the Indian Government that was carried out by the 22 women's studies centres, located in different regions. A survey based, collaborative, research-cum-action project, it aims to generate comparative data on the condition of the girl child that would help to improve planning and implementation of programmes. The editors have used data from the survey in W. Bengal carried out by the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University. Almost half the book is devoted to this data ever though on their own admission, it doesn't reveal any new insights, either because the respondents fit in their replies according to the assumptions and expectations implicit in the questionnaire or because they simply evade the questions. The 13 case studies that constitute the bulk of the remaining part of the book combines first hand interviews with brilliant analysis and makes for a very interesting read. The sample for this is drawn from a wide spectrum of 600 households cutting across region, caste, class, religion and the urban-rural divide. The target group consists of girls in the 7–18 years age group, covering four villages in two districts of W. Bengal and two urban wards in the city of Calcutta. In addition, it provides us with details about their daily activities, perceptions, ambitions and prospects. It supplements these with the profiles and ideas of their mothers or mother substitutes indicating if there have been significant changes from one generation to the other.

The very fact that the investigators of this particular project address the girl as a child subject seems to evoke a response from them that is child like. It is touching to find the girls lapping up the attention showered on them by the didis from the cities and this clearly points to their otherwise neglected existence. It is not at all surprising to find that the majority of them have internalized the patriarchal logic that requires them to accept and justify their deprived lot, to work from daybreak till night and yet have their labour dismissed as unproductive, to drop out from school to accommodate and take care of male siblings, to not know the taste of milk as their share is put aside to make tea, to be branded inauspicious if not married within a certain age limit etc. Deprivation is not just on account of economic reasons. As the Profiles show, the gender stereotypes working in the urban middle class homes are not very different. For example Prabha, the bright girl from the well-educated family in Calcutta has clearly internalized her father's contempt for her mother. The young Muslim bride Sakina wants to have children in order to conform even though her mother-in-law counsels her against it and Shanti, the fiercely independent and idealistic woman who has so far roughed it out in the slums suddenly invests all her faith in the security of marriage to an already married man. These profiles or case studies are illuminating precisely because they do not lay the blame on parents, however cruel or unthinking they may seem but try and locate the reasons for this situation in wider social processes.

There are exceptions of course. The three exceptional cases of the study are to be found in non-Hindu and more or less women dominated households. The Santhal girl, Maya and the Muslim girl, Majida embody the positive potential of the girl child, defying constructions of feminity and living life on their findings. However this optimism needs to be tempered with a critical examination of the stereotypes perpetuated by the present education system. It is simplistic to suggest that education holds the key to emancipation. While most girls, when asked what they think of education felt that it helped them to gain knowledge, to cope better in life and articulate things better. At the same time it is obvious that the reason for not linking up with career options is an index of their acceptance of the limited social space available to them. The book concludes with a thrust on making education job oriented as far as women are concerned. In its participative approach, it transcends the academic constraints that bind such projects by helping their respondents with some extra classes, story telling sessions, providing books for their libraries, giving the panchayats suggestions regarding the use of funds allocated for women, conducting health camps and generally leaving an impact that will not be momentary only.

On the whole a very useful document even as it reiterates things that are already well known. This is because it tackles the how of the problem rather than the why and in a way that incorporates solutions that are hard to come by if one attempts at explanations only.



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Nandini Chandra ia a Research Scholar at CLE, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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Realpolitik, Flawed Policies and the Wretched of India's Urban Earth

Saraswati Haider

POVERTY, POLICY AND POLITICS IN MADRAS SLUMS: DYNAMICS OF SURVIVAL, GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

By Joop W. de Wit

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 305, Rs. 395.00

De Wit's book belongs to a genre of anthropological studies which is an outcome of the dilemma faced by anthropologists robbed of their conventional happy hunting ground—small, compact, considered self-sufficient, insulated primitive societies, fast disappearing in the wake of rapid industrialization, advance of communication facilities and attendant 'modernization'. While anthropologists like Robert Redfield and Milton Singer sought new space in the study of whole civilizations, many found their comfortable niche and suitability of skills—not only participant observation, but others that are now being used to present data more authentically, and from the viewpoint of the investigated—in territorially circumscribed, segregated slums—a stigmatising and derogatory naming of the living space of the urban poor, requiring change, with a discourse on the subject already afloat and a move activated to call these by less disreputable nomenclatures like 'deprived urban areas' (DUAs), 'blighted urban areas', 'grey urban areas', etc. De Wit apparently still prefers to use the epithet *slum* for the DUA studied by him.

The developing countries are inexorably being driven towards urbanization. By the year 2000, sixty-six per cent—almost 2.2. billion—of the world's population will be living in urban areas of developing countries which countries will also contain 21 of the world's largest 30 metropolitan areas. There will be a marked shift of rural poverty to the urban milieus. In South Asia the number of urban poor households will triple from about 10 million in 1975 to 32.5 million by 2000 AD.

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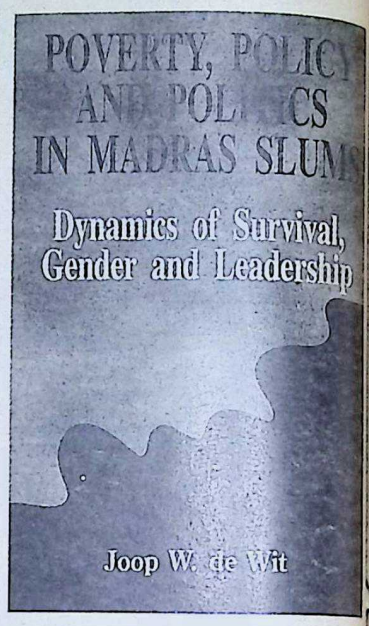
In India the total urban population in 1991 was about 217 million with the rate of urbanization decelerating from 46.40 per cent in 1871–81 to 36.19 in 1980–91—at present a subject of heated debate with the Government of India (GOI) seeing in it a success of its rural employment programmes but several scholars explaining the drop being due to a saturation point reached in urban employment, or lack of growth of it; inadequate provision of housing and basic amenities. However, the concentration of the population in large urban centres continues. The number of metros (million +) increased from 12 in 1981 to 23 in 1991 and 80 cities were added to Class 1 (1 lakh +) ones in which population increased from 26 percent to 65 with the metros containing 52 per cent of it and just four major metros (5 million +), including Madras, accounting for 28.64 per cent.

The GOI's revised poverty estimates stipulate the rural population living below the poverty line (PL)—still very much in the eye of a controversy—to be 37.27 per cent and the urban estimation 35.57 per cent individual scholars more realistically claiming this to be 40 per cent i.e. 87 million people.

According to the GOI estimates—erring in all probability on the lower side—the population living in the DUAs in 1981 in India was 26.33 per cent of urban population with the figure for the metros being as high as 38 per cent. The DUA population of Madras was estimated to be 35 per cent though de Wit claims it to be one third. In 1991 the population of Madras was 5.76 million and if the DUA population figure is kept constant at 35 per cent—hardly likely in the face of the influx of continued rural-to-urban migration—the DUA population of Madras works out to about 2 million—a sizeable 'vote-bank'—an integral part of Indian politics—that can make or mar any politician's career and whose magnitude and significance in electoral politics forces the government to formulate a viable DUA policy, in Delhi, being now demanded by an active judiciary.

De Wit does not seem to be sure, most probably because of the importance of all of them, as to what should be the overall objective of his study. Is it to be DUA policy—its planning, implementation and impact, politics in DUAs or the socio-cultural aspects of urban poverty and the business of living of the urban poor? However, de Wit seems to be quite sure and clear about the 6 themes that he wants to deal with, though, his is an ambitious project to be covered in a space constricting book for each of his themes has the scope and potential to form separate research studies in themselves.

De Wit's first theme is a study of intra-household relations, especially gender relations, where he describes the following briefly: how women play crucial roles in house management; often work to support their families where the husband—the head of the household—is inept though very few women are found to work because of the distrust of men of women; how women cope with the drunkenness of their worst halves, the arrack consumption and trade getting quite a significant space in de Wit's study because of its importance in the over-all Tamil Nadu politics and its pernicious effect on the DUA men. De Wit just itemizes resourceful, yet full of stress and strain, survival strategies resorted to by DUA men and women; the rather surprising vocality of women in the implementation of slum policy and the



demanding of pattas to be in their names but on the other hand their understandable disinterest in general politics confined to voting according to the wishes of their husbands. Households are categorized into four types, (a) Women-Headed Households—14 out of 89, (b) Alcohol-Addict Headed Households—27, (c) Low Male Contribution Due to Other Reasons—3 and (d) what de Wit calls Tandem Couples who unexpectedly form the majority—34 and where joint decisions and harmony prevail, an opposite situation to which I have found in Delhi in the DUA being studied by me with marked alienation, tension and discord in the man-woman bonding and all major decisions being taken by the males. De Wit takes note, again briefly, of the wide prevalence of wife-beating, discrimination of the girl child and child labour.

De Wit's second theme deals with the heterogeneity of the DUAs but he concentrates exclusively on the rich-poor divide and factional political groupings almost ignoring in toto other heterogeneous characteristics such as caste, ethnicity, region and religion which are all closely connected with DUA living and politics. Chitra Nagar—the DUA which de Wit researches first hand, is rather surprisingly, a total Dalit DUA and more astonishingly, de Wit seems to assume Dalits to be a homogeneous group, which they certainly are not.

The third theme that de Wit tackles is access problems of the urban poor because of their social handicaps of illiteracy, lack of knowledge of corrupt, speed money-demanding ways of officials and bureaucrats and the ubiquitous, confusing paper-work making the poor dependent on the better-educated,

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better-off, self-aggrandizing, unscrupulous slum elites who become slum leaders. The nature and implementation of the so-called, by de Wit, *slum policies*, is the fourth theme which is dealt in greater detail and forms the *tour de force* of the book—DUA policy in general, and relocation policy implemented and its impact in one specific DUA. De Witt tries to demonstrate the wide gaps that exist between planning, implementation and final outcome of DUA policies and delineates quite expansively crucial interlinkages involved in the paper planning of policies and the changes that the policies undergo, and why, during implementation, due to the interference of political leaders; corruption among the officials, bureaucrats, engineers, contractors, politicians, policemen and slum leaders who form an unholy nexus indeed, and who all dupe the urban poor to make a fast buck; lack of coordination between involved agencies; lack of finances, land; no attempt at involving community participation right from the planning stage; as well as the dependency tendency of the DUA dwellers so that the denouements of the policies are far removed from what was planned, most often, worsening the situation of the urban poor rather than improving it.

Politics is the fifth theme and forms a second significant core of de Wit's book which provides a brief, succinct but informative description of Tamil Nadu politics especially of the rule of the actor M.G. Ramachadran (MGR) whose advent marked the ushering in of political machine-type politics in Tamil Nadu; the use of the cinema to promote cults; more importance given to rice and arrack politics and social welfare populist measures—the creation of a 'politics of illusion' with no efforts made to transform inequitable structures and improve and build infrastructure. Within this theme de Wit also describes how patron-client relationships—political wheeling dealing aspect of which he calls clientelism—develops between politicians and DUA dwellers with the wily slum leaders acting as vote brokers having their own clientelist and patron-client relationships with the DUA dwellers. Here, however, de Wit again disappoints by not going into how clientelism actually operates at various levels; the nature of the relationships that are forged and how a pyramidical structure of clientelism builds up from the lowest rung to the highest.

The sixth and the last theme is a sketching of the culture and traditions of the DUA dwellers which is perhaps the weakest aspect of the book and receives a too hurried and limited treatment despite its pivotal role. The culture and traditions of Chitra Nagar is culled more from quantitative rather than qualitative data though the latter is more suited to reveal the subject's complexities and nuances and is the forte of anthropologists.

The recorded field work of de Wit's is not comprehensive nor does it delve deep enough. There is an excessive reliance on secondary data and the theoretical aspects of the six themes—a too large package, which is perhaps at the bottom of the cramming of snippets of information on too great a variety of subjects in an attempt to say everything that needs to be said about DUA life.

On the whole, the recorded field work of de Wit's is not comprehensive nor does it delve deep enough. There is an excessive reliance on secondary data and the theoretical aspects of the six themes—a too large package, which is perhaps at the bottom of the cramming of snippets of information on too great a variety of subjects in an attempt to say everything that needs to be said about DUA life—is again a skimming on the surface. De Wit's study is problem-oriented no doubt, and he does take into account the micro and macro level realities but is not able to use fruitfully enough all the multidimensional and significant aspects of 'the dynamic actor oriented policy analyses', 'the interface analytical framework' plus the 'deconstruction of the concept of planned intervention' developed by Norman Long which de Wit claims to have utilized—his multi-angular approach which in the absence of sufficient depth results in an excessive amount of bits of data compressed together.

De Wit's objectivity results in an account which is too clinical with the voices of the investigated actors remaining largely muted. However, de Wit's book is still significant in that it provides a whole lot of pointers to what needs to be investigated.

Saraswati Haider is a Research Scholar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Towards Balanced Development

Vinod K. Tiwari

INDIAN MEDIUM TOWNS: AN APPRAISAL OF THEIR ROLE AS GROWTH CENTRES

Edited by Jaymala Diddee

Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 263, Rs. 400.00

Improving economic base and infrastructure facilities in small and medium towns is considered imperative to a balanced regional development in the country. Small and medium towns play an important role in the diffusion of development to their hinterland and also act as service centres for the large number of rural settlements that do not have the services and facilities. In view of the unmanageable size of metropolitan cities in the country and high cost of providing services and infrastructure in such cities, development of small and medium towns is also considered necessary for diverting urban growth from the larger cities to the towns. However, policies promoting such towns need not be anti-metropolitan cities, but should form a part of an integrated urban development policy.

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Several programmes for the development of such towns have been launched by the Government of India in the various Five Year Plans. With the objective of promoting growth of small and medium towns, a centrally-sponsored scheme of Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) was launched in 1979. Under this scheme, the basic infrastructure required for income-generating activities is provided in selected towns that have potential for emerging as regional centres of economic growth, and are away from metropolitan cities. However, the scheme has not been very successful in promoting growth in small and medium towns due to the ad hoc approach used in selecting the towns and limited budgetary support provided for improving their basic infrastructure.

In this context, the book *Indian Medium Towns* edited by Jaymala Diddee is a welcome addition to the literature on Indian urbanization. It contains thirteen papers presented at a National Seminar on the Role of Medium Towns in Spatial Diffusion of Development, held at the Department of Geography, University of Pune in October 1992. The papers presented in the book are written by geographers and planners, and therefore focus mainly on spatial patterns of the towns in different parts of the country. Secondary data from Census of India provides the main source for the various analyses presented in most of the papers. A good deal of discussion in several papers presented in the book concerns the issue of defining a medium town and working out different ranges of population size for identifying such towns which seems quite trivial. The concept of medium town is by definition relative to small, large and very large size towns, and their relative size range keeps on changing with increase in populations of existing towns and cities. The relative size range of medium

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Growth of any town or city is not a simple function of population size but an outcome of complex process based on a number of social, economic, political, locational and physical factors, and therefore, conclusions like 'cities beyond half a million population display more vigorous growth' are erroneous. Similarly, the premise that infrastructure provided in towns of particular sizes will promote growth in the towns and their region is also flawed.

towns varies not only from one country to another but also from one state to another within a country.

The role of medium towns in the diffusion of innovations in their hinterland, and the locational advantage that they provide in service delivery to the large number of smaller settlements in the region are more important issues but these have not been examined in a systematic manner in any of the papers. As a result, conclusions questioning the rationale of promoting medium towns on the basis of an evaluation of the IDSMT scheme are drawn, as in the paper by Jaymala Diddee and Simi Octania. It is a well-recognized fact that many of our development programmes and schemes are not able to achieve their stated objectives because of serious lacunae in the implementation of the programmes. Failure or limited success of a scheme does not necessarily mean that the objectives of the scheme were not desirable. The authors' logic that "even big cities never really diffuse development in space rather they grow at the expense of the region" is based more on theoretical conjecture than on any methodical study of the linkages of the cities with its region.

Growth of any town or city is not a simple function of population size but an outcome of complex process based on a number of social, economic, political, locational and physical factors, and therefore, conclusions like 'cities beyond half a million population display more vigorous growth', are erroneous. Similarly, the premise that infrastructure provided in towns of particular sizes will promote growth in the towns and their region is also flawed. More detailed analyses need to be carried out to make decisions about provision of new infrastructure and services at locations that may facilitate development in the town and its region. Such analyses require use of various information systems, and planning and decision support systems supplemented by qualitative inputs from the various stakeholders, in view of the semi-structured nature of the planning process. However, the papers included in the book do not provide insights into any such support systems.

On the other hand, in some of the papers various quantitative techniques have been used to draw conclusions which are not strictly based on the analysis results. Shekhar Mukherji's paper in which a number of multivariate statistical analyses have been used for functional classification of urban centres in the country, is a perfect example of what Christopher Benninger calls 'technical gymnastics' in his paper. Here, complex statistical techniques, commonly used in regional analysis in the 1960s when quantification in social sciences began, are applied to weak data sets for functional classification of towns. It is difficult to accept the rationale of using factor analysis for functional analysis when in the first step he uses a simple indicator (proportion of agriculture workers) for classification of urban centres into 'agriculture' and non-agriculture' towns and then he subjects these two sets of towns to all kinds of multivariate analysis for further classification of towns within the two sets. The whole exercise seems futile particularly if one examines the way he has interpreted the factor loading etc. to identify the functional dimensions.

Walter Christaller's theory and its postulates do provide an excellent theoretical basis for structuring the planning and decision-making models for developing an efficient spatial organisation of settlements, but his hierarchical principles that were developed by assuming a highly simplified spatial context have no relevance in the present day actual planning situations. Substantial discussion in the paper by Nina Singh and Gopal Krishan is devoted to the use of Christaller's market principle of settlement hierarchy for proving the obvious point that population size of medium town is time and area specific.

Christopher Benninger's small paper included in the book raises some important issues involved in the development of small and medium towns, and therefore, it is a good paper for initiating discussion on the role of the towns and the steps that need to be taken to strengthen this role in promoting regional development. However, the paper does not provide any in-depth analysis of the issues and possible solutions. Aneeta Benninger in her paper highlights the urban problems caused due to increasing population in large cities, environmental degradation, social inequalities, informal sector etc. She does not find any merit in promoting small and medium towns and concludes that a spatial intervention by investing in the lower order settlement has not had a positive impact on diffusion of development. Some of the conclusions like 'industrial estates have failed and facilities such as health and education have been underutilised,' presented in the paper, are made without any analysis or citations.

V.S. Phadke, while rightly pointing out that size alone is a poor indicator of the importance of a town, emphasises that only those medium towns that have certain minimum infrastructure, institutional and economic base can provide intervening opportunities to stem direct migration to cities. The paper by Swapana Banerjee-Guha presents an interesting case study of Siliguri town that was selected as a growth centre in the early 1970s and examines the impact of various measures taken to develop the town as reflected in its population growth and occupational structure. She points out some basic flaws in the medium town development approach and draws attention to the inadequacy of support and planning interventions provided for the development.

Daksha Barai's and Vijayalakshmi's paper on the study of nine towns in the hinterland of Bangalore City analyses the various types of linkages of the towns with the city to develop a planning strategy for the development of medium towns. However, the suggested strategy has no innovative ideas except the ones like developing satellites towns, inspite of the fact that most development took place in the two satellite towns, Kengeri and Yelhanka, in the city region of Bangalore until the towns got subsumed in the city sprawl. Vasantha Kumaran's paper outlines some of the problems of urban development in the country and suggests some short term and some long term policy options that are very general in nature.

Though the papers presented in the book do not contain much in-depth analyses of the role and impact of medium towns in the regional development process, they do underline the importance of promoting the towns and highlight the lacunae in the policies and programmes initiated by the government in this regard. The book will therefore be found useful by those interested in the problems of urban and regional development.

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O my dear dad
Don't get me married to an old man

O my dear father
Don't get an old man for me
If you get me married to him
I will soon be a widow

My dear dad
Don't give me to a servant
He will be obedient to his master
And I will have to get up early
Don't send me away my father
Don't give me to an old man

Well, if you find a suitor for me
You may find a shepherd
But again to say
The shepherd should be tough and healthy
He should not be an ill man
Please do not get me married to an old man
Otherwise I will be a widow soon.

I would prefer a Pohal (a sheep rearer)
As he can provide me
Enough meat to eat
Enough wool for a chola.

(*A Gaddi song*) From *Languages of Indegenous Peoples of India: The Ethnic Space*

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If You Ask Me. . .

A Memorable Utterance

N.S. Jagannathan

Once in a while, you come across a speech of a public person that stands out in the midst of an ocean of banality of public discourse as an authentic utterance that will live for ever. At a venture, I could name Lincoln's Gettysburg speech, as one such, Mahatma Gandhi's defence of himself before Judge Bloomfield in the sedition trial in 1922 (and the judge's own memorable order sentencing Gandhi), and Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny" speech are other such. In what follows, I am going to summarize because it is too long to reproduce in full a recent speech by one of the remarkable men of our times. I am withholding for the nonce the name, the occasion and the specific references in it for reasons which will be soon be apparent. Here goes:

"With a degree of simplification it can be said that the life of our society—just as the life of any society under any circumstances—has two faces, one of which, in one way or another, is visible through the other.

"The first face consists of the things people do: they go to work, with varying degrees of success, they engage in business, they marry or divorce, they have children or remain childless. . . . They read books or watch television and if they are younger than most of us, they go dancing in discotheques. All things considered, I think our everyday life is incomparably better and richer (than before.)*

"The life of our society, however, has another face, which we might describe as the relationship of citizens to their state, to the social system, to the climate of public life, to politics. . . . At present, this face is, in fact, quite glum. Most people—and public opinion polls confirm this—are upset, disappointed, or even disgusted with social conditions in our country. Many people believe—democracy or not—there are people in power who cannot be trusted, who are concerned more with their own advantage than they are with the general interest. Many are convinced that honest business people operate at a disadvantage, while dishonest profiteers get the green light. The belief prevails that in this country it pays to lie and steal, that many politicians and civil servants are on the take, and that political parties—though they all, without exception, declare their intentions honourable—are secretly manipulated by shady financial cabals.

"After eight years of trying to build a market economy, many people wonder why our economy is still doing so poorly. . . They wonder why we are choking in smog when so much is apparently being spent on the environment, why prices, including rents and utilities, are rising faster. . . They wonder why we should be afraid to walk at night in the centre of our cities and towns, why almost nothing but banks, hotels and mansions for the rich are being built, and so on. In short, more and more people are disgusted with policies they understandably and rightly hold as responsible for all these unfortunate things. And although they freely elected us, they regard us with suspicion, if not outright repugnance...

"I shall mention only two causes, or more precisely, two sets of causes. The first set I would describe as historical... The "time of certainties"—certainties that were, to be sure, small-minded, banal and suicidal for society, but certainties none the less—gave way to a time of freedom. To many, given their previous experience, this freedom must have seemed boundless and therefore utterly seductive. With it, completely new demands were placed on individual responsibility, and many found this responsibility unbearable. I sometimes compare this odd state to the psychosis that follows imprisonment, when a prisoner, used to living for years in a narrow corridor of carefully devised rules, suddenly finds himself in the strange landscape of freedom, where he must feel that everything is permitted, and at the same time is overwhelmed by the immense need to make decisions each day and take responsibility for them.

"Of course, it would be unfair to blame everything—in a way familiar to Marxists—on blind historical inevitability. A role no less important, in some senses even more important, is played by a second set of causes. I refer to what we ourselves have wrought. When I say, 'we', I mean all of us who have served as elected representatives. . .

"It seems to me that our main fault was vanity. . .We were genuinely further ahead in some things than other countries—or so it seemed at first. . . Very likely this went to our heads. We behaved like arrogant students at the top of their class or spoilt only children who feel superior to others and think they have the right to tell others what to do. . .

"We were hypnotised by our own macroeconomic indicators, heedless of the fact that sooner or later, these indicators would also reveal what lay beyond the horizon of the macroeconomic or technocratic world view: that there are factors whose weight or significance no accountant can calculate, but which nevertheless create the only thinkable environment for any economic development—I mean the rules of the game, the rule of law, the moral order from which every system of governance derives, and without which it cannot function, a climate of social concord.

"The declared ideal of success and profit was defiled because we permitted a state of affairs in which the most immoral became the most successful and the greatest profits were made by thieves who stole with impunity. Under the cloak of liberalism, which regarded any kind of economic controls or regulations as left-wing aberrations, the Marxist doctrine of the structure and the superstructure lived on, though paradoxically it was hidden from view. Morality, decency, humility before the order of nature, solidarity, concern for the future generations, respect for the law, the culture of interpersonal relationships—all these and many similar things were trivialised as "superstructure", as icings on the cake, until at last we realised that there was nothing left to put the icing on: the forces of economic production themselves had been undermined.

"Man is a social being. He needs to associate with others in a variety of ways. He needs to participate in public affairs, be it only in his small world. He needs to work for the general good. That, too, was somehow forgotten. The phrase, "the citizen and the state" was bandied about, but it had the effect of isolating the citizen rather than engaging him.

"And the state as such? It should be small but strong, they say. Yet I am afraid the exact opposite is true: it is large and weak. . .

"I have come before you today not out of an obsessive need to lament, not to pick masochistically at my wounds, nor even to flaunt the wisdom of hindsight, which in the end would only lend credence to the utterly false notion that we have lost everything and achieved nothing. I have come before you for another reason: to meditate briefly on what lies ahead and what we must do to transform the gloomy countenance of our common life to one with a sunnier disposition.

"The first and most important point I wish to make is that the government, regardless of who forms it—and indeed, everyone active in public life—should say clearly to our fellow citizens that real human community and real prosperity are thinkable only if clear, good, and widely understandable and respected rules govern the various areas of life. Respect for these rules may of course be reinforced by the swift and strict punishment of their violation. But that is, and will always be, only a secondary measure. The most important thing is that this respect take root in people's mind so deeply that it becomes a matter of honour to observe the laws, not to flout and circumvent them.

"To put it another way: without a broad cultivation of the moral order, which alone can be the source of respect for the rules of human community, and thus as well as the mortar of our civic society, we will have no chance of achieving social peace, stability, contentment and prosperity. I am convinced that all of us who influence what goes on in this country must accept this principle as our own and attempt each day to imbue our political work with it. The citizens and the media must monitor this carefully, to see if we are really doing that job, and should they determine we are not, they must use every means the democratic system affords, to replace us with better people.

"Secondly, the entire system of technical rules that govern our life together, that is, our legal order, must be infused with the spirit of justice and decency. At present, because of unprecedented changes within it, our legal system is extremely tangled and complex. . . . I am deeply convinced that the clearer, more transparent, and comprehensible our legal system is to citizens, the greater our hope that it will be respected. . . .

"Thirdly, the network of local government and the civil service is the nervous system of the state. I consider it a great and fundamental task of the period ahead of us to begin reforming this system with all necessary speed. . .

"So what, in fact, is the state of our economy? . . . I don't share the opinion held by some that the entire transformation process was misconceived, badly thought out, and poorly directed. I would say that our problem is precisely the opposite. The transformation stopped halfway, which may well be the worst thing that could have happened to it. Yes, all manner of enterprises have been formally privatised, but which of them have clear and specific owners who are fully committed to enhancing their productivity and their long-range prospects?

"The role our banks play in this seems very strange to me. They indirectly own companies that lose money, and the more those companies lose, the more the banks lend them. A small businessman is unable to borrow half a

* Here and in what follows, words within brackets are my summaries of longer passages. Series of dots signify omissions.

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million in a sensible and specific investment, while some shady pseudo-entrepreneur can easily borrow half a billion without anyone taking a hard look at what he actually needs it for... Do we really have to pay for the rapidity of our privatisation process—a rapidity that was welcome and proper—with stolen billions, even tens of billions?

"...Do we have a clear conception of which enterprises are of such strategic or vital importance that the state must maintain its share of the ownership of enterprise, and which can be privatised without further ado? and if such a conception does exist, why are companies already earmarked for privatisation not being privatised?

"In other words, it is high time our economic transformation got its second wind. It is high time for politicians to draw up an inventory of what remains to be done, and to tell citizens, without delay, how they intend to complete the processes. The more clearly this is explained, the more easily citizens will come to terms with temporary sacrifices....

"No reasonable person could accuse the current government of ignoring the environment. On the contrary, the many billions spent on various environmental projects are beginning to bear fruit in the form of mild improvements in the state of the air, the soil and the water. Even so, I am still not persuaded that there is a clear conception behind such investments. Take, for example, the simple principle that cleaning up the environment already polluted by industry is not enough; nonpolluting industries have to be established as well...

"I have left culture to the end not because I consider it to be some superstructural "icing of the cake," but precisely for the opposite reason... I am not thinking of culture as a separate sphere of human activity, such as caring for the heritage sites, producing films or writing poetry. I mean culture in the broadest sense—that is, the culture of human relationships, of human existence, of human work, of human enterprise, of public and political life....

"Culture cannot be measured by the number of splendid rock stars who visit our country, or by the beauty of fashions created by world-class designers and modelled for us by world famous models, but by something else. It can be measured, for example, by what skinheads shout in the bars, by how many have been lynched or murdered, by how terribly some of us behave to our fellow human beings simply because they have a different colour of skin.

"This is not the first time I have spoken to you about the nonprofit sector, the reform of the civil service, and other such matters. But if I do it now, you must know I am talking about what is called a civil society. That means a society that makes room for the richest possible self-structuring and the richest possible participation in public life. In this sense, civil society is important for two reasons: in the first place, it enables people to be themselves in all their dimensions, which includes being social creatures who desire, in thousands of ways, to participate in the life of the community in which they live. In the second place, it functions as a genuine guarantee of political stability. The more developed all the organs, institutions and instruments of civil society are, the more resistant that society will be to political upheavals or reversals..."

So there. Surely, the speaker is, or could easily have been, an Indian? Every point made is so pat to our situation: the nature of our current discontents, the cancerously corrupt ruling class and the people's cynical acceptance of it as given, (as shown by the recent elections in which many "leaders" and parties with charges of malfeasance have been returned to Parliament), the steady erosion of vital institutions of a civic society and even the specifics of our political and economic situation seem absolutely apropos. Equally relevant is the moral of the urgency of renewing the tattered civic society by a stern sense of public purpose imbued with moral passion.

No, the speech is not by an Indian, though, as I said, it could well have been. That is why I have taken the trouble of reproducing from it extensively. It is actually the State of the Union address to the Czech Parliament delivered last December by President Vaclav Havel. (In November, the Czech Government headed by Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus had to resign following allegations that his party had drawn on a slush fund stashed away—where else?—in a Swiss bank. An interim government then came into being.)

There is a great deal more in the speech, which are context and country specific, which, as I indicated at the beginning, I have omitted, retaining only the "universal" points that Havel made. On second thoughts, the speech is too long to belong to the great (and pithy) utterances I had compared it to. It is more in the genre of Burkean eloquence, of memorable enunciations of first principles and the fundamentals of a civic society. As such, the speech is a great document of our times.

I am indebted for the above extracts to the English translation of the speech by Paul Wilson that appeared tin the March 5 issue of the *New York Review of Books*.

N.S. Jagannathan is a former editor of Indian Express *and* Indian Review of Books, *Madras.*

Letter from London

Stephen Moss

The past couple of months have been remarkable ones for the publishing business in the UK, with two sensational stories which have taken books out of the culture sections of newspapers and on to the front pages. Both concerned what might be called the politics of publishing and posed serious questions about the way the industry conducted itself.

The first was the Chris Patten affair, in which HarperCollins cancelled its contract to publish the former governor of Hong Kong's thoughts on the future of democracy in Asia because Rupert Murdoch, who owns HarperCollins, was anxious not to upset the Chinese authorities. Mr Murdoch's publishing interests, it would seem, come a distant second to his Asian satellite interests.

Stuart Proffitt, Mr Patten's editor and a senior figure at HarperCollins, resigned in protest, both at the decision and at the company's initial (and hastily retracted) claim that the book had been rejected because it wasn't good enough. Lawyers were consulted on all sides, the HarperCollins management looked absurd, and several authors withdrew their books from the company out of sympathy with Mr. Patten.

Then, just as the publishing business was getting over this shock to the system and with the luminaries of the industry gathered for the annual London Book Fair, came an even bigger sensation: the announcement in the United States that the German publishing conglomerate Bertelsmann was to buy the mighty Random House for the little matter of $ 1.4 billion and merge it with Bantam Doubleday Dell to create a company with 10 per cent of the US book market.

This merger has worldwide implications but what it means in the UK is the creation of one huge publishing company with a particularly intimidating presence in fiction. Random House's literary imprints are the strongest in the UK; Transworld is dominant in middle-market fiction; the two together will be a powerful unit.

The history of publishing in Britain over the past 30 years has been one of ever-increasing concentration. The imprints founded and run by "gentleman" publishers such as Hamish Hamilton, Victor Gollancz and Frederick Warburg were each absorbed into conglomerates. Now, in a development which Karl Marx would no doubt recognise, these larger groups are themselves the targets for companies that operate at a global level and across all media.

Old-stagers, understandably, become misty-eyed at such developments. They hanker after the days when publishing was run by a close-knit group of like-minded individuals—writers, publishers, academics, booksellers—fascinated by books, ideas, cultural exchange. It would be wrong to suggest that this has disappeared completely, but in a world now governed by conglomerate power there are clear dangers that the bond between author and publishers will be weakened. There is also a risk that publishers may be less keen to nurture new talent in favour of the bankable.

Tycoon power certainly underpins the Random House-Transworld deal. It was brokered in the US by Bertelsmann's chief executive-elect, Thomas Middlehoff, and S.I. Newhouse, chairman of Advance Publications, who met at a party last November for the latter's 70th birthday. The UK industry had had no indication that a deal was imminent, and even the Random House UK Board was not informed until 9.30 a.m. on the day news of the acquisition was announced to the press.

Nor will this be the last mega-merger. News International is hoping to sell HarperCollins and one possible buyer is the cash-rich Pearson Group, which owns Penguin. In the paranoid world of media tycoonery, the mighty Viking Penguin may now feel it has to get even mightier in the face of Transworld/Random House. And so it goes.

Faced with these examples of political pressure and corporate power, some pundits throw up their hands in despair and say the great days of independent publishing are over. But such an argument is premature. There is a counter-view that as this apparently inexorable concentration of capital proceeds, space opens up for smaller publishers; that, in effect, a new breed of independents is growing up who are faster on their feet than the conglomerates and can offer new authors more support.

Fourth Estate, Bloomsbury and Granta are cases in point—good, eager publishers with fine lists and a commitment to high-quality fiction. And Faber, one of the older guard of independent publishers, has been enjoying a remarkable year, largely thanks to the poet laureate Ted Hughes's best-selling *Birthday Letters* and *Tales From Ovid*. By acquiring Random House, Bertelsmann has created a mighty empire, but we all know what happens to empires.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of The Guardian.

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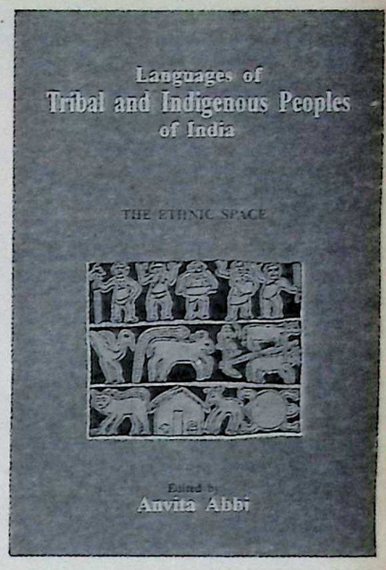
A Wise Policy is a Well-Informed Policy

Ashok R. Kelkar

LANGUAGES OF TRIBAL AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF INDIA: THE ETHNIC SPACE

Edited by Anvita Abbi

Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1997, pp. xiv+494, hb, Rs. 595.00



The long-winded book title testifies not merely to the editor's (and possibly the publisher's) desire to make it intelligible (will 'adivasi' not be opaque outside India?), acceptable ('aboriginal' like 'Asiatic' carries the White man's burden or 'primitive' carries the civilized man's arrogance) and attractive ('ethnic' and 'space' are fashionable), but also to the Indian reader's incuriosity, ignorance, and uncertainty about this neglected partner in Indian civilization and even more so about their languages. Sanskrit doesn't even have a name for people who are not either *sa-varna* or *ati-śūdra* or *mleccha* as a comprehensive term for *kirātas, sabaras*, or the like. The available philological, archaeological, and linguistic evidence for the settlement history of South Asia is still incomplete and inconclusive. So who is indigenous and who is not? (So there are those who even eye the term *adivasi* as politically incorrect or even as part of the White man's conspiracy to make a fictitious division between the ascendant Aryans and the recumbent non-Aryans.) Again, a person's linguistic ancestors may not be identical with his biological ancestors. Gadaba tribesmen variously speak Gadaba (Dravidian), Gutob (Munea Austro-Asiatic), or Bhatri (Indo-Aryan). Very few Nahal tribesmen now speak Nahali (Nahali Austro-Asiatic), most of them speak either Korku (Munda Austro-Asiatic) or Nimari (Indo-Aryan). Finally, not all the languages under review will care to be identified as 'tribal': Bangani or Meitei speakers (ch. 10, 25) for instance are not exactly tribesmen.

Be that as it may, the editor can take a justifiable pride in fulfilling the need for discussing these languages as a group, whatever their linguistic affiliation, between the covers of a single book from linguistic as well as perilinguistic points of view; even more so when one considers that there is no political or administrative will to support such an enterprise. The adivasis are no longer 'peace-loving, self-contented' (p. 1); everywhere they are expressing their economic or cultural distress with various degrees of intensity. How long is the apathy or callousness of the 'civilized' going to continue?

The contributors (the list at the end omits Norman Zide and Claus Peter Zoller by oversight) are mostly Indian (with a sprinkling of Americans and Europeans) and mostly linguists (with a sprinkling of ethnographers). The twenty-five studies are grouped under seven parts: over-all perilinguistic studies (5), case studies in linguistic contact and convergence (3), and language-specific studies in word and sentence grammar, writing system (but not sound systems), vocabulary and poetic style, internal and external history of languages, which are grouped under four families (Indo-Aryan 1, Dravidian 3, Austro-Asiatic 7, Tibeto-Burman 5) and a language isolate (Andamanese 1). (The other language isolate, Burushaski spoken in Pak-occupied Kashmir, never gets a mention.) In addition, there are the editorial preface and introductory chapter (in part I), Index, adequate illustrative material like maps and facsimiles, and most fetchingly, tribal language poems in English translation as epigraphs to the seven parts. The production is fairly good: one hopes that the misprints do not disfigure the language citations and wishes that the copy-editing had been more thorough. Thus, while the editor duly warns that 'language change' in ch. 18 does not mean change within a language but a speaker's shift from one language to another, she fails (p. 160) to correct Rāma's brother Bhārata to Bharata or to point out that *roiṇo* is not an echo of *rāt* 'night' but a descendant of *rajanī*. Given that the volume is as much addressed to the few studious administrators, educationists, and politicians still left as to socially alert linguists and linguistically alert sociologists and ethnologists, the contributors should have been alerted to refrain from cryptic allusions to technicalities and excessively abstruse formalism.

Some of the studies that make rewarding reading include: D.N.S. Bhat's lucid and penetrating study of noun-verb distinction in Munda languages; L.M. Khubchandani's reading of census returns as the citizens' political statement rather than as mere facts; M.S. Andronov's clearing up of two long-standing puzzles in Brahui (Dravidian language in Baluchistan) and Gondi historical phonology; Imtiaz Hasnain's balanced *mise-au-point* on language planning. Indeed none of them is wholly unrewarding.

Some very pertinent and interesting observations keep recurring: (1) The Government of India is nervously sitting tight on language data in the Censuses of 1971, 1981, 1991 so that scholars and policy-makers have to fall back on out-of-date 1961 figures. (2) The maintenance of language distinctness goes with the motive of ethnic pride or isolation from unlike languages. The shift or adaptation to locally or regionally dominant languages (as with Nahali to Korku or Bhatri) goes with the motive of economic or cultural assimilation. Likewise, with writing systems. Modernization in polity and technology can facilitate either of the two. The emergence of contact languages like Nagamese or Sadri can serve either motive. (3) The adivasis may have primitive technology, but speak no primitive languages (in the sense in which a child's earliest linguistic efforts may be primitive). Rather, the 'strangness' of their languages may be traceable to their ways of thought and life. (4) The cognitive strategy of a people may get reflected in word formation (sound symbolism, Badaga verb forms distinct for the factual, the open-ended, and the virtual) and vocabulary (low degree of division of labour going with low incidence of vocabulary specialization). (5) The life-coping strategy of a people may get reflected in sentence formation (predicate as a capsule sentence making reference claims or compliance claims, the other constituents being merely optional elucidations), phrase formation (noun encapsulating the relatum, noun tagged with a systematic classifier for animacy, shape, or the like), honorific and speaker-inclusive reference, and poetic text formation (in the depersonalized, mystificatory, and incantatory mode).

Some pertinent observations, contrary to expectation, fail to turn up: (1) Some features that are salient in adivasi languages also appear in non-adivasi languages: subject, object, and occasionally even indirect object encapsulation in the verb in Sindhi, Marathi (even Sanskrit to judge from Panini 2:3:1); profuse and systematic sound symbolism in Nepali, Marathi; honorific and speaker-inclusive reference; and so on. (2) Certain states in India (Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, for example) have experimented with bilingual medium of class room teaching and text books in the earliest years of primary education for preventing drop-outs. (I was associated with two such efforts.) The editor has invited no contribution on these efforts.

The message of this volume, though couched in sober, scientific terms is loud and clear: far from the adivasis being a 'problem' for the non-adivasis, the non-adivasis in all their complacency, apathy, pompous confidence, and rapaciousness are a problem for the adivasis. Language is the best entry point to the problem. The stumbling block is mindless adhocism strong on legislation but weak on positive action. Mindless emotionalism is only a reaction, especially when there is no move to take the affected people into confidence. It is time that the sober or not so hardened policy-makers, who will do well to read this volume, should din the message into the heads of the not-so-sober policy-makers if they can. The scholars have done their part of the job.

Ashok R. Kelkar retired as Professor of Linguistics from Deccan College and University of Pune and has published extensively in English, Marathi, and Hindi on language, literature, and the sign process together with their philosophical analysis.

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The Case of the Missing Mussulman

Harish Trivedi

DAASTAN-E-LAAPATA (THE TALE OF THE MISSING PERSON)

A Novel in Hindi by Manzoor Ehtesham

Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 245, Rs. 150.00

Why have there been so few Muslim characters in Hindi fiction—at least since Premchand? The question keeps coming up in Hindi critical debates from time to time, and there can, of course, be no politically acceptable answer to it. A strictly literary answer, however, may be that novelists always write not about the whole of society but about only the fraction of it which they know best. To adduce a counter-example, in Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*, a novel about the supplanting of the cultured old Mughal Delhi by the brash British New Delhi, of about seventy characters, only one is a Hindu and he occupies but half a page in which he is caricatured for speaking funny Hindi. And this when Ali's novel is set in a historical time and place, Chandni Chowk in the 1910s, where Hindus actually outnumbered Muslims! Apparently, then, for writers in terms of community as for Emily Dickinson in a more individual sense, "The Soul selects its own company—Then shuts the door."

But another larger reason why there are so few Muslim characters in Hindi may arguably be that there have been until recently very few Muslim novelists in Hindi to write about them. Until the last quarter of the 18th century, some of the foremost Hindi writers had been Muslim: Jayasi, Rahim, Rasakhan and Alam, and what is more, they had written broadly in the same bhakti idiom which the Hindu poets had adopted. But at about that time, there occurred a major split. Urdu arose as a medium for literary expression and most Muslim (as well as some Hindu) writers preferred to write in it, until the politicisation of Urdu and its adoption as a major plank for the separatist demand for Partition led to its elevation (and migration?) as the national language of Pakistan. Since 1947, however, Hindi has seen a return of Muslim writers in large numbers and we now have; correspondingly, a welcome wider representation of Muslim life in Hindi.

Manzoor Ehtesham is one such post-Partition writer and his third novel, *Daastan-e-Laapata*, (The Tale of the Missing Person) brings to us an intimate and complex account of what it means to be a Muslim in post-colonial India. This novel picks up more or less where his last novel, *Sookha Bargad* (1986: The Withered Banyan), already acclaimed in Hindi as a minor classic, had left off. But this new novel also marks a significant shift in narratorial mode and manner. While *Sookha Bargad* was a social realist novel tracing the growth to 'secular' self-realization of two adolescent Muslim siblings in Bhopal, the hero of *Daastan* is a Muslim man in his middle age, muddling along in a city

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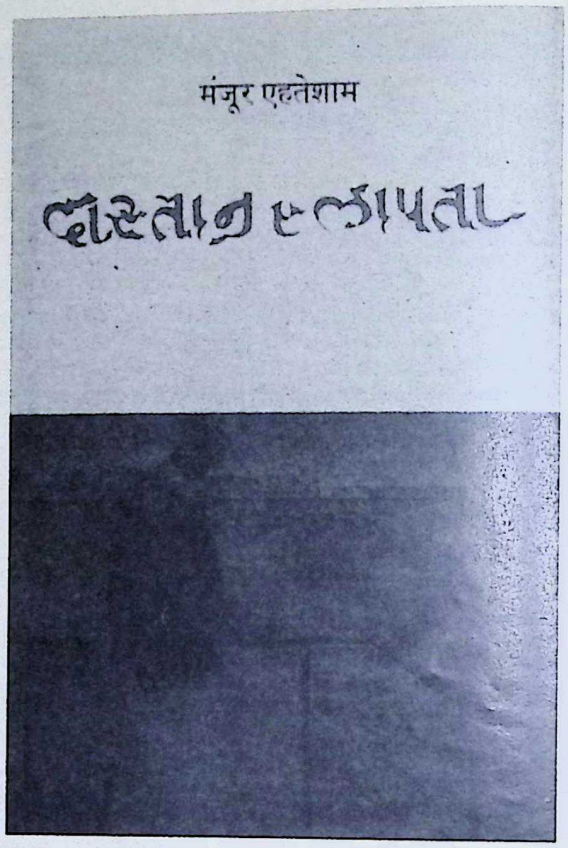

(still Bhopal) grown less congenial and a nation grown more bewildering. Our hero has now no hope of ever knowing who he is; he is so lost, indeed, that he has gone missing.

This man, named Zamir Ehmad (not Ahmad) Khan, suffers from an unspecified and undiagnosable disease, connects only fitfully with other characters in the novel (who are all Muslims bar one) and leads an altogether disjointed and ineffectual life. This is probably because this is partly a modernist novel, in which one may anguish over who one is without specific causes for being so anguished, and partly a post-modernist novel, in which all is contingent and fragmentary anyhow and, above everything else, a 'construction'—as the narrator intervenes in the two Prefaces planted in the middle of the novel to remind us!

Much of the power of *Sookha Bargad* lay in its being what is reductively called a social document, in its confronting reality head-on, and in its treating the Muslim-Hindu question with a candour so bold as to cause a *frisson*. *Daastan*, on the other hand, in its quizzical, playful and self-reflexive way, is first of all about the barely bearable lightness of being, and only then about being a Muslim. Questions of the alternative presence of Pakistan, Kashmir, Muslim personal law etc. are all raised but almost in passing, just as the Union Carbide Zamir and his one Hindu friend (with allegorical synonymity named Vivek) thus seems stuck on, a vestige from some older more schematic conceptualization. Even more implausible is the abrupt narratorial jump to December 1992 and the Babri Masjid in the last couple of pages; it lacks altogether the force and cogency of the reference to Bhutto's hanging in the last page of *Sookha Bargad*.

Though Manzoor Ehtesham may not think so himself, the best parts of *Daastan* are still the intimate scenes of Muslim family life which he evokes with a fine flair for nostalgia. As the young Zamir lies at night with his mother under an open sky, she teaches him how to trace a constellation which would spell in Arabic script the name "Mohammad". Dulhan Chachi goes for Haj all the way to Kaaba but refuses to kiss the sacred stone out of disgust on finding that it is already dripping with the saliva of the numerous faithful who have kissed it before. Asked to describe the Taj Mahal (which he has stopped by to see on his way to study in Aligarh) Zamir says it looks so fresh and spanking new as to suggest that perhaps the fortieth-day obsequies for Mumtaz Mahal were yet to take place.

There is an elegance and urbanity and wit in Manzoor Ehtesham which immediately marks him out from most contemporary Hindi writers (whose strengths often lie elsewhere). His narratorial manner is relaxed and confident and stylish, though it must be admitted that there is hardly any more

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of the *daastan* mode in this novel than there is of the name in *The Trotter-nama*. On the whole, however, this book reads like a novel still vaguely and amiably in search of itself. It is not centred in a character or even in human relationships, it does not address any specific theme (unless Muslim life in north India is a theme by itself), it is at times naively self-indulgent, and of the three equal parts into which it is divided, the last one is so slack and inconsequential as to seem dispensable. Perhaps this novel was too long in the making; perhaps there arose a writer's block at the end of Part II, as there did famously in the case of *A Passage to India*, which incidentally makes an interesting intertextual appearance here.

Finally, such have been the conditions of Muslim-Hindu coexistence in north India in our times that the language in which one writes about them becomes itself part of one's subject-matter. The Hindi that Ehtesham writes is on the whole so fluent and idiomatic, and so subtly and variously flavoured, as to be a source of constant relish, reminding one at times of an accomplished stylist such as Amrit Rai. But it also has its little cruxes and problems. As might perhaps be expected, Ehtesham uses some Urdu words which may not prove immediately accessible to many Hindi readers: *khalaqat, shadeed, fzir, kushadagi, aitiraf* and *subukdosh*. But it is when he indulges in the bilingual trick of using an Urdu word first and immediately after providing its Hindi synonym ("*maharat aur siddhahastata*"), or when he uses Urdu and Hindi words together in new and strange collocations ("*vajib kaaran*", "*pukhta aastha*") that one gets the odd sensation which Premchand described as that of sighting an odd crow in a row of swans. However, it is in his occasional determination to show that he knows heavily Sanskritized Hindi as well as the next fellow that Manzoor Ehtesham betrays himself as basically an Urdu writer writing in Hindi (—as indeed did Gulsher Khan Shani earlier and Rahi Masoom Raza not in *Adha Gaon* but in the dialogues for the T.V. *Mahabharat*). For example, Ehtesham writes of "*nirbaadhyata*" and "*samagra aur sampoorna paripakvata*," thus gratuitously endorsing the artificial, government-sponsored, dictionary variety of the language which has served to give Hindi a bad name and to hang it. And all this in a novel! As poetic retribution, perhaps, his publishers have misprinted Ehtesham's own name on the dust-jacket, the title-page and even the copyright by-line (but not as it happens on the back flap), as not Manzoor but *Manjoor*, as a small price he must presumably pay for writing in Hindi-without-the bindi. *Kyon bhai Manzoor, manjoor hai*?

Harish Trivedi, Professor and Head of Department of English at Delhi University is the author of Colonial Transactions: English Literature (new ed. 1995) *and co-editor of* Interrogating Post-colonialism (1996).

Whatever this character "Zameer Ehmad Khan" is I am not. . . I believe that each person in this world is condemned to live with a character of his own imagination who may be as difficult to distinguish from himself as it is for the sufis and saints to distinguish between Ishwar and Allah. I call this character my Missing Other, for even though he is a flower of my own imagination no one is more oblivious of its fragrance than myself. . . .To distinguish him from other Missing Persons we may call him Zameer Ehmad Khan 'Laapata' Bhopali. . . The more I love life the more this Laapata Bhopali grows detached from it. The incidents in my life which I wish to disregard and forget, in an attempt to launch a Samjhauta Express between my past and my future, are the very milestones where this Laapata wishes to pause and rest.

Indeed Laapata Bhopali is the termite who has fed and prospered on the waste of my personality, my body, my soul.

Translated by Harish Trivedi

The Press and Telugu Literature

Turai Muralidhar

The printing press was an important part of the missionary equipment in the nineteenth century India. Realizing at once that to instill love of Christ in the heart of the people they must approach them through the medium of their mother-tongues the missionaries set about learning them and within no time of their arrival they had produced books in the vernaculars. The Telugu printing machine had arrived in Madras by 1818. The missionaries had no extensive or intimate knowledge of genius of the Telugu language. The result was their writings were artificial and sometimes even amusing for their malapropisms. But the printed books and newspapers, for both of which the missionaries were mostly responsible, brought literature within the reach of the average man and helped in its advancement. The first Telugu paper *Vrithanthini* appeared from the city of Madras during 1838–1841. *Varthamana Tarangini* edited by Purvada Venkata Rao too had a short run. *Hitareda* was started in 1848 at Machilipatnam. Like most early newspapers it was not merely a purveyor of news; it was also interested in literature.

The first Telugu paper to have accorded primacy to literature was *Sujanaranjani* (1865), Bahujanapalli Sitarama Charyulu and Karumanchi Subbarayulu Nayudu seemed to have kept their objectives clearly in mind while editing it. The paper was a friend to the University students giving Telugu equivalents to important English words. Narrow and illiberal in its outlook and a stalwart champion of the past *Andhre Basha Sanjeevani* was throughout its career the rallying point of every conservative prejudice and was opposed among other things to religious reforms and female education. The first Telugu elegy which appeared in its pages was commended by English journals such as *Journal of Education, Native Public Opinion* and *Journal of Hindu Sreyobhi Vardhani Sabha. Purushardha Pradayini* *(1872) ran uninterrupted for twenty years under the able editorships of Umaranganayakulu. All important literary genres were fostered in its pages which had an English section.

Vivekavardhani (1874–1893) edited by Kandukuri Veeresalingam projects before us the portrait of an age, Kandukuri Veereshalingam had progressive ideas and his articles on matters social, religious and political with their infusion of rationalism caused a stir in the Telugu country. Children's literature in Telugu was published for the first time in *Jana Vinodhini* (1875–1885). Established in 1885, *Amudrita Granta Chintamani* was devoted exclusively to the study and dissemination of Telugu literature. It had influenced trends in Telugu literature for about two decades. Efforts to delimit and categorize the term "novel" with reference to Telugu literature were made by *Chintamani* (1890–1994). The efforts bore fruit and the paper successfully conducted a novel competition for authors. The first women's magazine *Balika* was edited by Sangitarao Bapiraju. *Sasirekha* (1893–1900) used to project before its readers the portraits of men with striking gifts and lovable personalities.

The steady increase in the number of newspapers and journals in the twentieth century is symptomatic of increasing literary, social and political awareness among the Telugu speaking populace. *Hindu Sundari* (1902) had a distinct social and political creed. Its contributors, all women, had a stronghold on their readers in those days of divided aims and shifting values. It did the work of a university in enlarging the horizons of interest and forming and cultivating the taste of whole generation of readers. The career of literary magazines such as *Manorama* (1906–1910) and *Deshamatha* (1910–1913) had been steady but undistinguished. *Andhra Bharathi* (1910–1915), the leading literary journal published *'Diddubatu"* the first Telugu short story. Research in Telugu studies was the forte of *Andhra Sahitya Parishatpatrika* (1912). *Telugu* was founded by Gidugu Ramamurthy on February 28, 1919. Gidugu was the champion of the use of spoken idiom in literary Telugu and his journal gives an idea of the stupendous struggle of his time between the

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no-changers and the prochangers in Telugu prose. The now-defunct monthly magazine *Bharati* gave literary status and dignity to the spoken language of the people in both poetry and prose and broadly speaking, the language thus evolved continues to be the standard language of Telugu literature today. It is in the pages *Bharathi* that one can find the first floroscense of modern Telugu literature.

Literary journals, newspapers and periodicals have come to exercise a great influence on modern trends in Telugu literature. They define the age and give it its name. Different literary epochs have been named after journals like *Arunatara, Gabbilam* and *Bhoomika*. *Arunatara* has a preference for literary studies which search for aesthetic dimensions arising out of the organic interrelationship between literature and social life. The magazine has introudced many poets who subsequently blossomed into front rankers in Telugu poetry. Individual issues of *Aruntara* are either miscellaneous or special numbers focussing on single writers, works or other significant themes. Some of its special numbers like those on Ravi Sastry (153-January, 1994) and Chalam (157 May 1994) are thoughtfully conceived and carefully planned. *Gabbilam* carried perceptive articles related to Dalit life and literature by scholars and academics. *Bhoomika*, edited by Kondaveeti Satyavathi presents poems, songs, stories from the far and near and children's literature.

Chaitanya Kavitha a journal devoted exclusively to poetry is edited by Professor T.V. Subba Rao and Dr. R.V.S. Sundaram. It publishes metrical compositions, songs as well as translations from other languages. Besides creative writings, *Sravanthi* publishes book reviews. It belongs to the category of *Chaitanya Kavitha Misimi* a monthly edited by Annapa Reddy.

The Sunday issues of Telugu dailies feature book reviews, poetry, articles and interviews with literateurs. The literary pages of Andhra Jyothi and Andhra Prabha reflect new ground broken by writers of today. The views and literary ideals of writers from different schools of thought are enunciated, expressed and practised in these pages.

Venkateshwara Reddy publishes articles dealing with various aspects of literature. The other major journal is the famous *Rachana* with which are associated stalwarts of Telugu literature like Kalipatnam Rama Rao, Kavana Sarma and Kethu Vishwanatha Reddy. This magazine is popular and creditably maintains a high standard. It has created a reading public, intensified popular interest, served as a model and also reared a band of enthusiastic writers. It has largely contributed to the rapid growth and enormous popularity of modern Telugu short story. *Telugu*, the property of Telugu Akademi, publishes criticism on Telugu literature covering all periods—classical, medieval, modern and contemporary. Telugu Akademi disclaims responsibility for statements of facts or opinions made by contributors to the magazine's columns. *Telugu* occasionally publishes stories. The most uptodate trends of Telugu literature particularly the work of young poets, short story writers and critics are reflected in the vigorous monthly magazine *Ashwanam*. All literary genres—poetry, short story, novel-etches and essays are cultivated in its pages. New ideas and fashions in literature are the special merits of the magazine. It has created a stir by encouraging young writers to experiment in various forms of literature. *Ashwanam* has been the pivot of a modern intellectual and literary movement, a movement which may be likened to a great river embracing many small and apparently insignificant tributaries all of them ultimately converging by winding courses into the great stream and thereby enlarging and reinforcing Telugu literature in all its variety and profundity.

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Austen—From Classic to Postmodern

Dhananjay Kapse

JANE AUSTEN: AN ANTHOLOGY OF RECENT CRITICISM

Edited by Harish Trivedi

Pencraft, Delhi, 1996, pp. 254, Rs. 280.00

"There is a great deal of sex in the novels of Jane Austen" begins Nicholas E. Preus's "Sexuality in *Emma*: A Case History" in the book under review. Before you react with outraged literary sensitivity or salacious interest, let me hasten to clarify that this is not another attempt to make Jane Austen the hottest commercial property in Hollywood. Sexuality' for Preus is not what most people take it to be, but rather the social generation and expression of the sexual instinct with all its complex networks of verbalization and ritual within the matrix of individual relationships. This kind of investigation would have been impossible without Michel Foucault's monumental *History of Sexuality*, and Preus's essay is obviously indebted to it.

Foucault and other 'theorists' are conspicuously present in this collection of recent essays—most of them published between 1989–1992. "Jane Austen and Theory" would have been an equally appropriate title. The editor in his introduction gives a bird's eye view of developments in Jane Austen criticism, right from 1816, the year before she died, to the 1990s. It is indispensable reading if one wants to understand the implications of these recent theoretical developments. Even otherwise his characteristic witticisms impart a much needed leavening to what follows.

If from the beginning the world was divided into Janites and Janophobes (e.g. Walter Scott vs. Charlotte Bronte), the terms of debate don't seem to have changed for more than one and a quarter century. Her 'ivory-work', 'classicism' and 'elegance' were contrasted with her narrowness, conformism and lack of acquaintance with passions. The eulogy-dismissal binary opposition gave way to a different kind of reading with the appearance of the work of D.W. Harding and Marvin Mudrick in the 1940s, and for the next 40 years analysis rather than appreciation or deprecation was the key-word. With the stranglehold of 'theory' in the western academy it was inevitable that this most 'classic' of authors could not remain immune to it and after 1980 the various new insights provided by literary theory—premised on radically different ideas of self, language and representation—have been harnessed to read Jane Austen in various different ways and this volume is a collection of thirteen such essays, ten previously published abroad in journals or books and three published here for the first time.

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It is certainly legitimate to wonder about the 'use' or 'relevance' of such interpretations except to the miniscule academic community. For neither the world nor the way we look at it have changed despite criticism's tall claims. But then this kind of reductivism can be taken much further, about the use or relevance of any book or indeed of life itself. What one appreciates about this book, despite certain problems, is its strong focus on the socio-political context not only of the author but also the reader, and for a change, the 'Indian' reader of canonical English literature.

If you are already opposed to the hegemony of academic(-ised) or theoretical readings, the two concluding essays by Edward Neill and Roby

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Warhol may feed further fuel to your resistance. Warhol's "The Look, the Body, and the Heroine: A Feminist-Narratological Reading of *Persuasion*" engages in the study of narrative structures and strategies in the context of cultural constructions of gender'. Pulling away from historical criticism, she asks the question, 'What happens when a feminist resists the powerful temptation to think of Jane Austen's heroines as persons and scrutinizes them as functions of texts, instead? 'We have surely come a long way since the 1850s when G.H. Lewes said that Elizabeth Bennet was 'one of the few heroines one would seriously like to marry'. Warhol does have some interesting discussion of a heroine's access to knowledge, through the act of looking (the "female gaze') and to pleasure, through textual consciousness of the body, but the arid style and excessive jargon mar this essay as well as Edward Neill's "Between Deference and Destruction: 'Situations' of Recent Critical Theory and Jane Austen's *Emma*".

I am in the academy, so I am reasonably familiar with these debates, but even my patience was tried by Peter Conrad's "Irony in *Pride and Prejudice*". One wonders how the editor could have overlooked wild, sweeping, unsubstantiated generalizations such as, "Jane Austen is a great novelist despite herself", "her creativity is a reflex not of generosity but of baffled impotent ill-will". Conrad sees in her novels 'Jane Austen's own inability to control her characters', for him 'the novelist longs for change but is too bleakly honest to imagine that it is likely.' It's not just sloppy writing that is the issue here but whether the critic is saying anything meaningful. Frank Kermode in a devastating piece of sarcasm once wrote, "I confess to doubting that a book capable of eliciting the unstinted admiration of Peter Conrad can be worth reading". So I will leave it at that.

You only have to read Meenakshi Mukherjee's "To hear my uncle talk of the West Indies" to see criticism that has depth as well as elegance. Starting with the premise that Jane Austen, unlike a lot of her characters, was neither unaware of nor indifferent to the larger world outside England, she goes on to provide a detailed analysis of Austen's depiction of the English social system. Her conclusion provides a vital corrective to Peter Conrad's excesses:

> Jane Austen's novels involve us in insoluble problems about the breadth/narrowness of her vision, the humanistic/hierarchical basis of her values, and the degree of mobility/stasis in her narrative design. ..The indeterminacy is manipulated through ironic focussing, the irony being not always against others but sometimes turned inward.

Edward Said's "Jane Austen and Empire: *Mansfield Park*" also develops further Raymond Williams' seminal formulation that the society in Austen's novels is "an acquisitive high bourgeois society at the point of its most evident interlocking with agrarian capitalism that is itself mediated by inherited titles and the making of family names". Proposing that geography is not a neutral fact, any more than class and gender are neutral facts, Said reads *Mansfield Park* as part of the structure of an expanding imperialist venture in which Austen synchronizes domestic with international authority, making it plain that the values associated with such higher things as ordination, law and propriety must be grounded firmly in actual rule over and possession of territory.

These two essays are, for me, the highlights of this volume, refreshingly free of jargon, rigorously argued and full of original insights. Amy Smith's "*Northanger Abbey* and the Sentimental Novel" is more informative than illuminating and David Lodge does a much better job of placing Austen in the tradition of the novel in his "Jane Austen's Novels: Form and Structure", with an exemplary use of Russian Formalism. Julia Prewitt's "Women and Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*" written specially for this volume, both focus on how Austen's novels convey an idea of everyday existence centered around the experiences of marriage and family life. Oliver MacDonagh's very materialistic (literally) reading of *Sense and Sensibility* gives us the economic knowledge that Jane Austen acquired, the economic knowledge that the novel displays and some of the implications of the relationship between the two.

Another interesting and welcome feature of this book—indeed of the New Orientations series—is an account of classroom experiences of teaching and studying Jane Austen in India. So you have a Delhi University student proposing that students in India can read Jane Austen with more affinity than students in the West because the socio-economic-cultural transitions that Austen was talking about are happening in India today while western students need to take an imaginative leap. There is an interesting attempt to compare *Emma* with Premchand's *Nirmala*. These are not revolutionary or earthshaking but refreshing. They make you want to read or re-read the novels even if you are not an academic. What more can you want from a book of literary criticism?

Finally I must put in a word of appreciation about the quality of production of this book. The paper is good, the binding is handsome, and the price not unreasonable. Especially when one compares it with MacMillan's Casebook series. It is heartening to see an Indian publishing concern bringing out this excellent collection. It would have been even better had there not been so many typographical errors, (Pamberley instead of Pemberly, face instead of fact, enearned instead of unearned—all in the space of a few pages.) Moreover one also wishes for a "Further Reading" bibliography, other articles that he might have included but did not. More power to Pencraft, but can we demand similarly well-produced books on Indian authors please?

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Into India In Depth

Feisal Alkazi

INTO INDIA

Edited by Sally Moss

Book & Video Package published by Curriculum Corporation, Australia, 1997, pp. 202, price not mentioned.

RAINING SURPRISES: HENRY IN INDIA

Edited by Julia Fraser

Macmillan Education Australia, 1996, pp. 48, price not mentioned.

EXPLORING INDIA: TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

Published by Macmillan Education Australia, 1996, pp. 64, price not mentioned.

In an ever shrinking world where people from diverse cultures and backgrounds are increasingly working together, much more needs to be done at the level of school education to inform and educate, and even more importantly, challenge the prejudices and biases that exist. Such efforts, largely UK or USA based, come under the general title of Development Education, and are neatly slotted into the new social studies curriculum. I have worked extensively in the field of school education over the past 17 years. It therefore comes as a welcome bolt from the blue to have to review a series of publications in this area—from Australia! And my surprise turned into admiration when I poured over the first of these, an extremely well thought out (and brought out!) twin pack of video and book entitled *Into India*.

This pack has been published by the National Centre for South Asian Studies, a consortium of eight Australian universities committed to the education of young people in their own country. In a multicultural society such as Australia, the large wave of Indian immigrants in the 80's and 90's, have necessitated a much greater focus on Indian studies. And the relief is that the material focusses much more on contemporary India—post 1947—than that familiar carping on the wonder that was India! *Into India* seeks to address a neglected area in Australian education, and as a trailblazing effort, it has much to recommend it. The focus all through is on India as 'an emerging industrial and technical giant in the Asia Pacific region' with 'a sizable and prosperous middleclass.'

The choice of what to include and the organization of the material breaks a lot of new ground. The approach throughout is that by understanding the detail and investigating it in depth, you can begin to decipher and unravel the whole picture. This movement from micro to macro is evident in every chapter. The book begins with a chapter "Threads of time" that narrates the long history of Indian textiles, and through it provides an insight into technological innovation, assimilation

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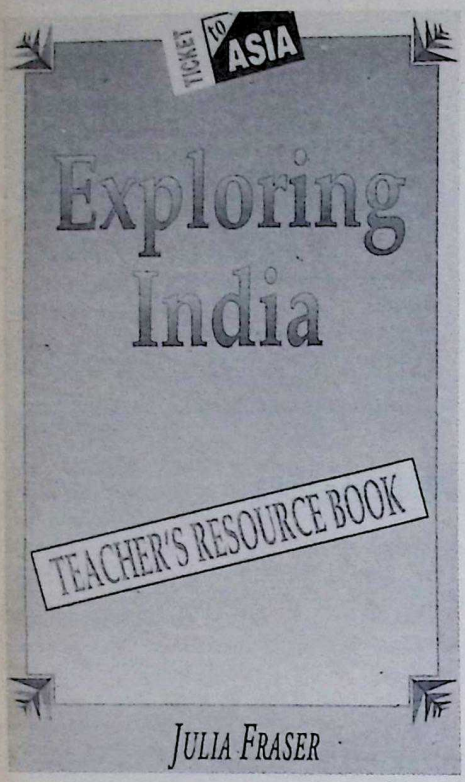

of influence and response to change in markets. The accompanying halfhour video *Computer Sarees* focusses on how Indian textiles are poised to capture world markets once again, with their combination of traditional techniques of manufacture and modern designing. By using the case-study of Anokhi in Jaipur, the video brings to life the entire textile production process from designing to the use of traditional vegetable dyes, block making and printing to marketing in Australia. The Jhajoria family linked to Anokhi for 25 years becomes a testcase to prove the prosperity that such modernization of a traditional system brings.

The next section "Spinning A Nation" traces the journey of modern India from British Raj to swaraj. This section interprets our contemporary history even as it informs. For instance it draws an interesting co-relation between Nehru's Leftist tendencies and the Salt March: and informs us that President's Rule was only imposed four times in Nehru's era, but 80 times since his death(!), or the ever more staggering statistic that we produce 25 million newspapers a day!

The thriving, alive, political nature of Indian democracy comes across clearly, when one of the Indian students interviewed in the book responds to the question 'Is democracy possible in a country the size of India?' by saying 'Certainly it is possible. Even though there is a large population, every individual wants to be free. Nobody wants to be suppressed. Every individual wants to have rights. So that is only possible in India or in China or America, it has to be a democracy if it is to work over a long period of time.'

Through a series of structured activities for the student to do, and investigations for him/her to carry out, this chapter brings alive the politicisation of every aspect of our lives. Consider this activity.

Politics. What do you think of when you hear this word? Write down all the things that come to your mind. Share your ideas with the rest of the class. In two sentences, describe the main features of the class's full list of the words that were suggested. Why do you think you have these opinions about politics?

Think about all the things you did yesterday, even down to things that may seem trivial—such as brushing your teeth or listening to the radio. Once you have thought about those, make a list.

Now use a different colour to circle those activities or items that you think have been under the direct or indirect influence of government decisions, (For example, the radio station you listened to would have had to apply for a licence to broadcast, the radio itself was probably imported from another country. Importers are affected by government policies regarding import quotas and tariffs. The water that you used for your shower may have been piped from government built dams)

How many items did you circle in your list? Choose three of these items to describe how political decisions were involved in the activities that you listed.

The second video *Freedom of Choice* explores the same theme by following through the electoral process in St. Thomas' School, Delhi along with a long interview with T.N. Seshan, intercut with the omnipresent Republic Day Parade. "How has India remained a democracy without the army taking over?" is the question posed here—and it is answered by focussing on three pro-democracy institutions: the free press, the academics and intellectuals and the legal process. The film then rather haphazardly moves from the Indian countryside to MGR to Swami Agnivesh. However this is certainly one of the tighter video episodes of the five.

The following section focusses on economics—through looking at the phenomenal growth in the diamond cutting industry, the huge purchasing power of the Indian middle class (with interesting tables of the increase in consumption of consumer goods and heading the list is 'the mosquito coil!) and on the liberalization of the economy.

The following two video sequences are poorly made—rambling in their style, and consequently diffused in their focus. Relying on interviews and not wanting to hold talking heads on screen, the illustrative footage often wanders far from the theme and is extraneous. *At the Cutting Edge* follows through the diamond chain, from the Argyle mines in Australia to their cutting and polishing in Mumbai. It skims over several important points that could have been pursued in detail—a 15 year old who has left the rural countryside for a job in urban India, the contrast of working conditions in the diamond industry in Australia and India, the fact that often 70% of those employed are women... . Also the illustrative footage used is often drab and boring, not unlike some of our substandard DD documentaries! The rather strangely titled *Love Is In The Air* on the environmental crisis, moves from the students of a school in Agra studying the impact of acid rain on the Taj, to the environmentally sound design of a traditional Indian house, to the haphazard growth of Agra to neem toothbrushes! As with all the other videos (with the exception of a brief sequence in the last) this video is also North India-centric. As with a lot of material developed on India in the first world, the images and shooting are all drawn from that triangle of Delhi—Jaipur—Agra. The furtherest South one gets is Mumbai! So while the text of the book is not bound by stereotype, the videos often are stereotyped, regularly going off the beaten track to shoot *exotic* India—children in a cyclerickshaw going to school, the decaying urban landscape, the roadside dhaba, the huge movie posters. All in all both these particular video segments are poorly conceived and put together, at least to an Indian viewer!

"Serving The Symbols", a textual section on the Indian ecological crises follows. Included in this section is The Endangered Tiger", a detailed simulation game on Project Tiger, that draws students into debating the very real issue of conservation of wildlife, by playing the roles of park officials, environment activists, poaching gangs, indigenous people etc., each with their own specific agenda to pursue. The game takes an even more exciting turn when a surprise element is introduced—news of a sensational raid exposing a 90 crore haul of tiger related products. Media representatives, nearby agriculturists and others then enter the fray. After the game is over, there is a detailed debriefing suggestion that each group look at the realities of the situations represented in the gam This is followed by a series of furth research exercises. In all such an activi would take 7 fifty minutes periods, a proves the point that real learning c also be tremendous fun.

This is of course followed by t inevitable story on pollution and t Taj, and documentation of the age o life style of a very unique communit the Koli fisherfolk of Mumbai, who l sandwiched between Cuffe Parade a Nariman Point. The last section is the changing role of women, and Indian TV and teenagers! Much of t material excerpted here is from *In Today* articles of the past few years. T last video segment of *Dreams, Mothe in Law and Videotape* opens with t usual aerobic dance sequence from Hindi movie. Javed Akhtar in a d lightful brief interview describes India cinema as being the dreams of our s ciety, an expression of the India psyche. The video then jumps fro illustrating the joint family ethos, t arranged marriages versus love ma riages, to a parallel debate betwe Ausralian teenagers and Indian on on the institution of marriage. Enjo able, gently provocative fare.

The book succeeds because of t innovative activities and investigation that have been suggested for the teach to conduct with the students, such the one on Project Tiger that has be detailed above, and which, to my min is a prime example of the book's ped gogical thrust.

However there are a couple of are where the book does not totally succee One is the rather brief text for the st dent. While every chapter for the st dent is preceded by a detailed back ground note for the teacher which comprehensive and informative, m own feeling is that the text for the st dent tends to be just too summarize Further there is a lack of effective illu tration, and a rather prosaic layout. course one can argue the point that b book is to be used in conjunction wi the video that is teeming with a ran of rich visuals. But all the same keepi in mind the visual savvyness of today young person, the rather sparse, o fashioned, almost NCERT(!) drawing leave much to be desired. They are al too few and far between. Perhaps much racier design style would captu the student participant.

Further one could debate the poi of whether one should totally avo talking about poverty in India in su material that has been devised for t uninformed reader. To focus only the burgeoning middleclass as being representative of an Indian reality questionable. Also this book wou have been even more effective if the

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had been more of a continuity between the chapters. In this way through structured activities the student would have been led to co-relate and assimilate material, which is at the present diverse and segmented. This would help the student get a sense of 'the whole picture.'

Raining Surprises is a picture album of the visit of a young Australian boy to India, with a few lines of text accompanying the photographs on each page. The acknowledgement page sums up the mission of the book: 'to create a new generation of Asia-literate Australians.' It is easy to describe what the book is like, by quoting the opening lines, "This story book is for all the kids in grade 6C, because I've been to India and its not what they said it was like at all. This is about my India. A place full of surprises everywere I looked."

Each page caters to, and would delight the young reader—with titles like 'Everyone loves cricket' or 'A good horn, good brakes and good luck' as the three requisites to survive traffic in Delhi!

To support *Raining Surprises*, there is a teacher's book which supplements the brief information included on each page of the children's book. Here there are activities to do, recipes and drawings (including a delightful one that plays around with the shape of the Sydney Opera House to create the Lotus Temple in Delhi!) There is a lot of background information on geography, history, culture, social problems, not organized conventionally, but as 'A day in the life of Sujeet,' 'What is on TV tonight,' or 'How to grow your own Silkworms'.

All in all these three publications are noteworthy because the student reader is encouraged to develop a concept of Asia, not only in geographic terms, but also in relation to history, culture and economics. An appreciation of the linkages between Asian nations, and their diversity can go a long way to help the student identify the roots of their negative stereotypes and analyze the basis of these in perceptions based on imperialism, racism, ethnocentrism and sexism. Positive values of social justice, democracy and equal opportunity and of ecological susttainability are built into the book.

Definitely worth acquiring, even for an Indian school library!

Feisal Alkazi is an educationist and a media person.

Spring here, Spring there
And spring is everywhere.

On this forest and on that
On this tree and on that
On the leaves, in the leaves,
On the flower, within the flowers,

Spring here, spring there
And spring is everywhere.

Above, below, the red and the green
Sky, lands, filled with laughter and dance
The cuckoo and the nightingale, coos and sings
My heart pierced with all these things.

Spring here, spring there
And spring is everywhere.

Upon this cornfield and on that
In this underwood and through that
The fragrant wind jostles through
Clouds in the sky and clouds on earth
And the wind blows my heart about.

Spring here, spring there
And spring is everywhere.

(A Children's song written by Tabu Taid. *Translated by* Satish C. Abbi)
From *Languages of Indegenous Peoples of India: The Ethnic Space*

A Book Store with a View

By Sanjoy Hazarika

On Colombo's busy Galle Road—which as the name suggests is a road that does lead to a town named Galle (not the Biblical one but one that is overwhelmingly beautiful by the Indian Ocean side)—is a building that proudly advertises one of Sri Lanka's best known names: Vijitha Yapa Book Shop.

Starting from scratch in 1992, facing hostility from dominant booksellers and magazine vendors who had monopolised the book trade for decades in Sri Lanka, Vijitha Yapa (that indeed is the name of the owner), a small, cheerful man with a mischievous grin that camouflages a razor-sharp business mind and decades of active journalism (he has worked in India, edited two major Sri Lankan dailies and writes for *The Times*, London, out of his country) now presides over a chain of book stories in the capital and elsewhere. And he is master of the international magazine trade on the island.

The flagship store is, of course, the shop at Unity Plaza which is on two levels, stores 180,000 titles and sprawls over 10,000 square feet. It's ideally located: right next to the Majestic City Shopping Mall which brings potential buyers and in the heart of Colombo's busy commercial district.

There are text books and stationary areas, CDs as well as the latest bestsellers in paperback. Newspapers too are stocked including the *International Herald Tribune*. There is a section on English such as Jane Austen, Shakespeare, Eliot and Emily Bronte are specially popular. The international bestsellers do brisk business here in the land of Yapa: John Grisham, Frederick Forsyth, Daniel Steele and Sidney Sheldon.

But Sri Lanka's own books are holding their own in the literary world and doing well at home as well—Michael Ondaatje (*The English Patient* and other luminous novels), Carl Muller and his sardonic observations of life in Sri Lanka, Colin De Silva and John Gunsekhara.

There is a growing stable of Sri Lankan writers who are published locally. Some are locally popular like Punyakante Wijenaike's whose Giraya (the slicer used for cutting areca nut) has been made into a television serial. But as in India, those who write in Sinhala are more widely read.

And in the non-fiction category, it is hardly surprising that J.N. Dixit's magnum opus on his years in Colombo as well as V.N. Narayaswamy's book on the Tamil "Tigers" are best-sellers. Dixit's book has been translated into Sinhala and is going to be a continuing success, Yapa says, who is now going into publishing in a modest way, beginning with Dixit. His turnover has gone from zero in 1992, when he began with his wife Lalane, who is as deeply involved in the daily running of the company and business, to over 70 million rupees (Sri Lankan).

There are already three book shops, including the latest in a very upmarket shopping mall where the latest music plays and Colombo's beautiful people go to shop, in the Sri Lankan capital. There are three more, in Galle, Negombo and at Kandy in the hills. Yapa plans to open a bookshop now in Jaffna.

Browsers are encouraged. They may not buy any titles but they will see the latest and get them from people who will. The Vijitha Yapa Bookshop is more than a business; it encourages the reading habit and has delightful persons like Rohan Wijesekhara, the manager in the main store, who helps people make choices, recommends titles and buys books himself to read.

And despite the pressures of living in a war-torn land, Yapa, a small man with a big heart and a ready smile and a fund of stories, both tragic and delightful, has found an island of enlightenment for himself and his readers.

Sanjoy Hazarika

The village of Sosore—Jaranga
Is at the heart
Of a deep, dense, forest,
O my elder brother
Tell me if I should stay there?
I had gone to fetch water
And my binda was transformed
Into a snake.

O my elder brother, how will I stay there,
I had gone to fetch firewood
And my axe became a tiger,
O my elder brother
Tell me how to stay there.

(A Jatara song of Mundas) 'The Awakened Wind'—Sitakant Mahapatra

From *Languages of Indegenous Peoples of India: The Ethnic Space*

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Books-in-Brief

K.P. Shankaran

THE TOUCH OF MIDAS edited by Ziauddin Sardar. The Other India Press, Mapusa, Goa, 1997, pp. 253, Rs. 150.00

The book under review contains twelve papers presented at two seminars held in Stockholm and in Grenada respectively in the years 1981 and 1982, under the general theme 'Science and Technology of Islam in the West: A Synthesis'.

According to the editor Ziauddin Sardar, contemporary science has the touch of Midas. On the one hand it has brought mankind riches beyond dreams; on the other it poses a serious threat to the very existence of the human species. Sardar is obviously referring to the problems created by technological development, over-industrialization, environmental degradation and the like. One might rightly think that these allegations do not apply to pure science and that it is unfair to talk of the crisis in science without making a distinction between the two. But Ziauddin Sardar's point seems to be that the distinction between pure science and applied science is really a matter of definition and argument. Research programmes, for instance are themselves frequently selected not for their theoretical content but for their market appeal. As Robert Wall-gate, the European editor of *Nature*, points out in his contribution, solid state physics has progressed largely because of the search for new material by the electronic industry.

The word 'contemporary' in Sardar's phrase 'Contemporary Science' has a special significance and deserves to be noted. This author and all the other Muslim scholars who have contributed to this volume have tried to argue that they are not against science 'per se'. They see no conflict whatsoever between science and Islam. Contemporary science however, they argue, is anti-Islamic and Eurocentric as well. In other words contemporary science is seen as a value-laden enterprise which is designed primarily to create a Eurocentric World Order.

Interestingly enough many of the European scholars whose papers appear with those of the non-European Muslim contributors, tend to agree that science is not value-neutral. While it may not be particularly anti-Islamic as the Muslim scholars have tried to portray, they seem to admit that Science's eurocentricity is difficult to deny. Raveto, the historian of science, seems to be saying precisely this when he states that the civilization based on science was destructive to *ALL* other civilizational enterprises. In this context the papers of Alison Ravetz and Lloyd Timberlake are significant. The former is a historian of architecture while Timberlake is the editorial director of *Earthscan*. Their contributions can be read as a critique of the idea of the Europeanization of the globe. Alison Ravetz discusses the result of Europeanization as it appears in some of the Islamic countries. It created, according to her, a cultural dependency in which ex-colonial societies were obsessed by their own inferiority and by the superiority of western technology and expertise. This caused them to disparage their own rich vernacular traditions and adopt western type plans and buildings that would in their eyes place them in the modern world. Timberlake observes that one of the main victims of the blind import of western technology and the uncritical imitation of western strategies of development has been Islamic architecture. Islamic Architecture was once the best in the world. It was beautiful. It turned the glare of the desert sun into pleasing patterns of light by the use of lattices. Made of earth and tiles, it was cool in summer and warm in winter. It trapped breezes and released them gently throughout the structure, thereby cooling the occupants. It resisted the climate for hundreds of years. Today, he says, Islamic nations are relying on designs of steel, glass and cement, mostly imported from the West. These buildings are ugly, expensive, energy intensive and uncomfortable in the local climate.

We have to understand the idea of Islamic Science—which is the main theme of the Muslim contributors—against this background of gloom and disorientation. The Europeanization of the globe was indeed a historical disaster. But once this happened, the desire for a pre-Europeanized world order, however tempting that might look, deserves to be taken with a pinch of salt.

The idea of Islamic Science is introduced by Husain Sadar in his paper entitled 'Science and Islam: Is there a conflict?" Sadar seems to suggest that Islam unlike Christianity is very science-friendly. He quotes relevant passages from the Quran to support his claim. However he concludes by saying that "both the means and ends of science must submit to Quranic ideals". He does not seem to notice that science came to clash with Christianity not because Christianity was inherently unscientific but because the science which emerged with the advent of printing in Europe's early modern period, had a mind of its own and refused to submit both its means and ends to Biblical ideals. Given this fact, any attempt by Islam to confine science within Quranic injunctions, could also result in a similar divide between Science and Islam. Hence Hussain Sadar's claim of Islam, unlike Christianity, being science-freindly, appears rather far-fetched.

An interesting play of the concept of Jihad occurs in Gulzar Haidar's paper entitled 'Habitat and values in Islam: a conceptual formulation of a Islamic City'. Jihad is defined as implying a struggle 'directed towards the establishment of a framework for facilitating the divine purpose of Islam. In this sense, Muslims are expected to constitute a very active, dynamic and goal-oriented society, one that is willing to sacrifice even life if there ever is a final choice, between right and wrong both Quranically defined.

Given the significance of 'Jihad' in Islam, the non-Muslim may well question Islam's ability to tolerate non-Islamic forms of culture. Without a satisfactory answer to this query, Muslim intellectuals cannot hope to enlist the support of non-Muslims (some Muslims as well) in their endeavour to cure science of its touch of Midas. The non Muslim would undoubtedly not wish to fall from the frying-pan into the fire.

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S.O. Junare

TOTAL MANAGEMENT BY RATIOS: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH by Hrishikes Bhattacharya. Sage Publications, India, New Delhi, pp. 340, Rs. 350.00 (hardback)

The subject matter of financial management has been changing at a rapid pace. Three decades ago, the scope of financial management was limited to the raising of funds, whenever needed, and little significance was attached to financial decision making and problem solving. But now the field of financial management has become extremely wide. The growing importance of the subject is indeed due to several challenges and opportunities faced by the Indian organizations in the continuously changing dimension of their size, management style, legislation and socio-political and economic situations. Considering the challenges before the business organizations the financial manager has to ensure that funds are raised economically and used in the most efficient and effective manner. Because of this change in emphasis, the descriptive treatment of the subject of financial management is being replaced by a growing analytical content.

In financial management Ratio Analysis is considered a powerful tool of financial analysis. A ratio is used as a benchmark for evaluating the financial position and performance of a firm. On the other hand, the usefulness and importance of Ratio has become a wider decision oriented concept. A carefully chosen ratio or set of ratios could be both information as well as a tool of decision making and control in every area of management.

The book under review *Total Management By Ratios* is a pioneering work. Existing works in the field have focused only on a particular segments such as accounting ratios or financial management. In contrast, the study provides an integrated approach, which enables the reader to take both a functional and holistic view of business organizations.

The book is divided into seven chapters In chapter 1, the author has given a comprehensive account of historical developments in the use of ratios (in different phases), particularly in financial analysis, and businesses have been reviewed.

In chapter 2, the author has discussed an approach of model towards integrating business function through ratio analysis. The chapter highlights the importance of management information system and management control through ratio analysis. It also highlight various financial parameters for management control technical control, managing optimal information, decision-making and management control, standards of comparison through ratios for decision-making and integrated approach.

In chapters 3 and 4, the author has discussed various ratios for financial management and broadly divided the management function between operational management and financial management, marketing management and sales management, working capital management and debt service management. All these functions are then integrated by developing a simple model for measuring and monitoring managerial efficiency.

In chapter 5, the author presents alternative ratio models for the measurement and monitoring of efficiency of important management functions. The author applies his ratio analytical framework, utilizing primary data relating to a real life

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situation to determine a unique growth rate beyond which an enterprise is likely to fail.

In the next two chapters, the author explains the ratios which can be used as predictor variables to enable a manager to evolve strategies for growth and prevent the business from going bankrupt. In chapter 6, cash flow of a business are captured through an algebraic model. A summary of findings from empirical research is presented to highlight growth constraints followed by the development of simple ratio analytic growth model.

In chapter 7 the author explaines the uses of ratios for predicting business failure and gives some illustrations in which ratio analysis is used as a predictor variable to enable the manager to evolve strategies for growth as also to prevent the business from going bankrupt. However, topics like "Ratios for Operating Management" and "Ratios for financial Management" elaborated in the book require more illustrations with practical cases for easy understanding. Though the author has presented maximum ratios for different functions of management, some of the ratios were found common in different functions of the management.

In going beyond the conventional analysis of financial statements and in integrating the entire gamut of management functions through ratio structures, this book on ratio analysis will be of considerable interest to professional managers and to bankers for credit appraisal. It is useful for university students and other professional students of like ICWA, CA, ICAI, CFA etc. and researchers also.

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SPEAKING OF AYURVEDIC HERBAL CURES by T.L. Devaraj. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, Rs. 65.00

Speaking of Ayurvedic Herbal Cures is by Dr. T.L. Devaraj, an eminent Ayurvedic physician and former Professor and Head of the Department of Dravyaguna and Panchakarma, Government College of Indian Medicine, Mysore and Principal, Government Tarantha Ayurveda Medical College, Bellary. He is, presently, the Deputy Director of Ayurveda in the Department of Indian systems of Medicine and Homeopathy, Karnataka. An author of more than 15 books on Ayurveda, he has been honoured with an International Award for his outstanding contribution to Ayurveda.

Ayurveda, as we all know, is one of the most ancient systems of medicine, that has its origin in India. It has proven cures for a number of diseases both chronic and otherwise. In the Ayurvedic system the medicines mostly of indigenous herbs, where extracts from roots, barks, leaves, flowers and fruits are used in given proportions to cure a particular ailment. In the present book the author has presented herbal cures for 75 diseases like Adenitis, Anorexia, Arthritis, Bleeding nose, Hoemorrhoids, Bronchial Asthma, Coryza, skin diseases, High blood pressure etc. The names of each herb are given in sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Latin. To facilitate the user/reader to identify the herbs before use, sketches/photos of each plant is given. The author has also dealt with the properties, composition and usage and the prescribed dosage for most of the herbs. So, this book would be useful to students of Ayurveda as well as those who would like to use the commonly available herbs to cure themselves specially common in ailments like coryza, constipation, dyspepsia etc. Some of the things of common use like lemon, ginger, garlic, radish, beetle leaves, tulsi leaves, coriander are great healers as well and Dr. Devraj has dealt with these properties in relation to the diseases they cure. At a time when allopathic treatment has become very costly and quite beyond the common man's reach the alternative systems of medicines are definitely gaining ground and this book would be a welcome addition to the library of practitioners of these systems. The remedies suggested in this book are well worth trying since they are cost-effective and completely free of side effects.

However, there are a few avoidable mistakes in translating the names of some herbs in Tamil and Telugu. For e.g., jackfruit has been translated as Panasa in Tamil, while it should be Palakkai or Palapazham, jamoon as shambu instead of Navalpazham, Inji instead of sukku/chukku for sont/dry ginger and similarly miriyali in Telugu is spelt as Meriyalu and cinnamen has been translated as saralipu instead of chakka. In a book of such scholarship the author should have paid closer attention to such details as correct translations and correct spellings.

Jaya Varadakrishnamachari

BOOK NEWS BOOK NEWS BOOK NEWS BOOK NEWS BOOK NEWS BOOK NEWS

■ CULTURE STUDIES

The Hindu Culture: A Clear and Concise Summary for Youngsters
Mrinal Bali
Starting from a study of nature rather than from voluminous tomes of the Hindu culture the author explains the basics of Hindu culture to young people in a manner and language they relate to and understand.
Youngster Publications, Pune, 1997, pp. 78, Rs. 120.00

Visions of Modernity
Scott McQuire
This book explores the relationship between technology, society and identity that underpins contemporary media culture. It offers an admirable overview of modern visual culture and discusses a wide range of debates in cultural theory.
Sage Publications, 1998, pp. 279, £45.00

■ HISTORY

In the Meadows of Gold: Telling Tales of the Swargadeos at the Cross roads of Assam
Sayeeda Yasmin Saikia
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Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1997, pp. 244, Rs. 395.00

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Dharma Kumar
The author examines diverse issues that have been important in history writing in India such as the nature of the colonial state, changes in land distribution, the invisible sector and the extent of taxation in Mughal and British India. The essays are grouped under separate heads—the Madras Presidency , land, comparative studies of India, Indonesia and China and the evolution of the colonial states.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 385, Rs. 595.00

Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India
Penderel Moon
During the turmoil leading upto Partition the author a member of the ICS was posted at Bahawalpur and he gives a first hand account of the manifestations of communal frenzy and the efforts to stem the tide of terror. First published in 1961 by Chatto and Windus it is a classic piece of writing on the period.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 324, Rs. 295.00

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The present volume first in a 3 volume study documents the critical factors that led to the partition and includes 579 original documents collected from private and public archives in India, Pakistan and the U.K. These documents account the events that occurred between 1937 and 1939 and revolve around the political activities of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League.
Centre for Federal Studies, Hamdard University, Nanak Publications, 1998, pp. 1017, Rs. 2950

Secularism, Democracy, Justice: Implication of Rawlsian Principles in India
Nalini Rajan
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Edited by Satish Saberwal and Heiko Sievers
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Edited by Rajeev Bhargava
Contributors here address issues such as: Is Secularism best understood as a doctrine of separation? Why, if at all, must religion be separated from political institutions? What does separation mean? Is secularism a comprehensive ethical doctrine which must alienate believers or is it a more narrowly defined political doctrine. Relatively independent of rival ethical and metaphysical conceptions to which believers are committed?
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South Asia is a region crowded with refugees and the displaced. It has the fourth largest concentration of refugees in the world and it is a situation that calls for urgent action. No South Asian state government has formulated a policy towards refugees or migrants and responses are mainly ad hoc. This book reflects the concern to humanise the response to the situation of refugees.
South Asia Forum for Human Rights, Nepal, distributed by Manohar Publishers, 1997, pp. 380, Rs. 450.00

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Caste System, Untouchability and the Depressed
Edited by H. Kotani
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Caste, Class and Agrarian Relation in Kerala
Abraham Vijayan
This work deals with the structural aspects underlying the complexities of agrarian relations of Kerala and also the mode of production and the concentration of land ownership pattern. The author has also studied how far caste hierarchy tends to coincide with class position, irrespective of groups and power structure.
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This book describes the social organisation and cultural processes of Buddhist and Muslim households in two of the Nubra valley in Ladakh. The frontier community is conceived as the locus of a ceaseless struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces in the domains of language, religion and politics.
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The author pleads for promotion of small-holder land settlements in the Tarai which is most suitable for agriculture instead of pursuing a policy for conservation which lets productive land lie idle while the hungry people of the area multiply.

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Joseph W. Elder, Edward C. Dimock Jr. and Ainshie T. Embree (eds)
81-7304-235-7, 1998, 608p. Rs. 750 (HB)
81-7304-257-8, 1998, 608p. Rs. 400 (PB)
The volume aims to felicitate the people and government of India on the fiftieth anniversary of India's Independence, to acknowledge the ways in which the study of India has stimulated US scholars during the period and to express gratitude on behalf of AIIS to people and the government of India for their help in the scholars' endeavours.
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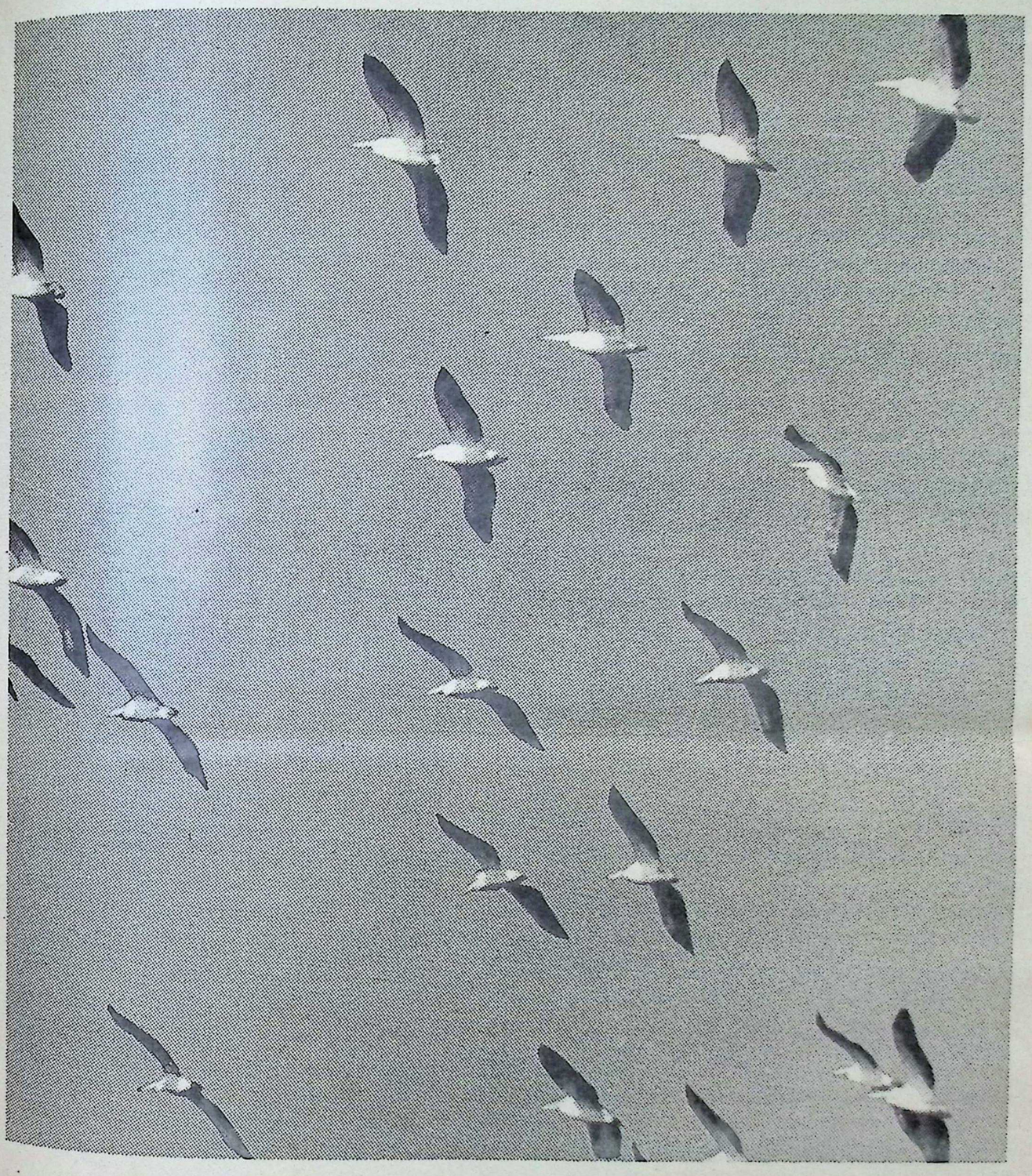

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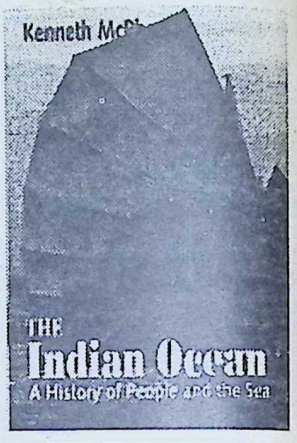

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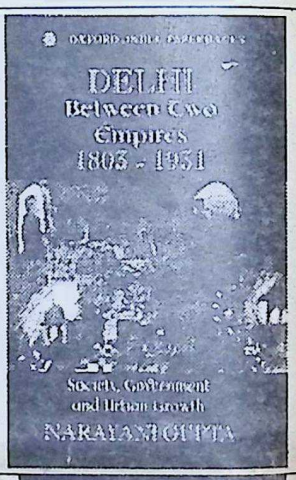

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THE BOOK REVIEW

VOLUME XXII NUMBER 6 JUNE 1998

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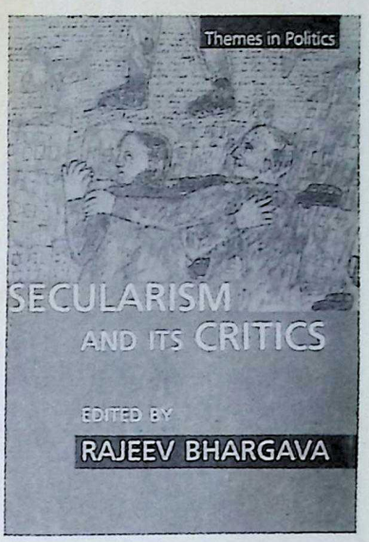
Secularism in India: Ideal or Illusion?

Brian Barry

SECULARISM AND ITS CRITICS

Edited by Rajeev Bhargava

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 550, Rs. 695.00



In *Through the Looking Glass*, Humpty Dumpty told Alice that when he made a word do a lot of work he always paid it extra. On that basis, the word 'secularism' would be able to present a very large bill to the publishers of this book. One might not unreasonably pick up a book entitled *Secularism and Its Critics* in the expectation that there was something called 'secularism' which was going to be defended by some people and attacked by others. Such a belief would make it impossible to make sense of what is going on in the book. In fact, the 'secularism' attacked by some contributors has only a fairly tenuous connection with the 'secularism' defended by others. More surprisingly, perhaps, the precise set of arrangements advocated by one contributor as a departure from secularism would count as secularist on the definition of at least one other.

• • • • • •

In a secular society, arguments for or against public policies will rarely be made on the basis of religious beliefs, simply because such appeals will have little impact. But must a secular state be one in which public policies are not advocated on religious grounds?

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It is important to distinguish between a secular state and a secular society. A secular state is one that is detached from religion. A secular society is one in which religious beliefs are weakly held by most people and play little part in their lives. Some countries whose states come close to the secular model, such as the United States and Turkey, are far from being secular societies. Conversely a relatively secular society does not have a completely secular state: England and Sweden, for example, both have an established church and most western European countries subsidize religious schools. Nehru (quoted on pp. 311–12) drew this distinction in 1961, saying that, although the Indian Constitution made India a secular state, India functioned as a less secular society than England. This could be taken as setting the terms for the debate about alternative futures for India carried out in the book by a number of (resident and non-resident) Indian scholars.

In a secular society, arguments for or against public policies will rarely be made on the basis of religious beliefs, simply because such appeals will have little impact. But must a secular state be one in which public policies are not advocated on religious grounds? This question has arisen in an acute form in the United States, where politicians and other public figures frequently claim religious support for their positions. Some scholars claim that it is a violation of the 'wall of separation' between church and state for this to occur. This would mean that it was illegitimate for Martin Luther King to invoke the Christian gospel in support of the civil rights movement or for the Roman Catholic bishops to plead for more generous welfare provision on the basis of the Church's social doctrines. It is easier to see how a secular state can be maintained in a non-secular society, if we define a secular state in purely institutional terms.

None of the chapters focussed on the Indian situation seems to me to get quite clear the distinction between a secular society and a secular state. Stanley Tambiah offers a valuable analysis of 'secularism', but even he confuses the issue by equating "the establishment of religion" clause in Art. 1 of the U.S. Constitution, which declares that government shall neither prescribe nor proscribe religion with secularism as defined by the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*: 'the doctrine that morality should be based on regard for the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state' (p. 420). The definition is clearly of an entire philosophy of life, sometimes called 'secular humanism'. But the separation of church and state is (as the American example demonstrates) entirely compatible with a society in which secular humanists form only a small minority.

Other authors mix things up much more systematically. Thus, T.N. Madan and Ashis Nandy (who are ably criticized by Tambiah, Akeel Bilgrami and Rajeev Bhargava) say that 'secularism' is inappropriate to Indian conditions. But while it is clear that India is not a secular society, this leaves it open whether or not the state should be a secular state. According to Madan, the notion that religion can be 'privatized', as a secular state requires, is one that makes sense only to 'Protestant Christians' and not to 'Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs' (p. 298). This leaves Roman Catholics in limbo (appropriately enough, since only they believe in it), but Madan later endorses the claim that 'secularization is the gift of Christianity to mankind' (p. 307), so perhaps non-Protestant Christians get in too.

There is a certain irony in Madan's eager embrace, on behalf of the East, of an 'orientalist' idea originally developed to show the superiority of the West. In any case, it is plain that non-Christian religions can flourish in (more or less) secular states. Thus, the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim religious communities thrive in Britain. Moreover, societies with an overwhelming preponderance of non-Christian believers can also be secular, as Turkey illustrates most dramatically. (It is interesting in this context that 'Jawaharlal Nehru's first mention of the secular state in writings (1933) was in connection with the Turkish republic' (p. 192). Those who wish to question the political relevance of this example will no doubt point out that secularization in Turkey took place in the aftermath of a revolution and even then has needed the army to underwrite it. But that does impugn its relevance in showing that a secular state in a non-Christian country is not only intelligible but feasible.

Most of the contributors are concerned with the prospects for a secular state in India, taking it as given that India is not and is not likely to be in the foreseeable future a secular society. A number of the authors are in favour of a secular state, but it seems to me that none of them actually wishes to endorse a secular state as I have defined it. Instead, they tend to identify a secular state with the set of institutional arrangements that they wish to advocate. Thus, Bhargava and Bilgrami both argue for some kind of negotiated settlement among religions in which the state plays an active part. This may be a perfectly reasonable proposal in the Indian context, but I question the applicability of the term 'secularism' to it. Bhargava calls it 'contextual secularism', but perhaps it would be more perspicuous to say that it is a proposal designed to be applied in a context in which secularism is not a politically feasible option. Bilgrami rejects the idea of an 'Archimedean' argument for a secular state. (An example of such an argument would be that it is the only way of realizing the values of equal liberty and fair treatment.) Instead, he hopes that it will be possible to persuade each religion's adherents of the virtues of eventual state disengagements by appealing to their own beliefs. But this idea, which parallels the American John Rawls's recent notion of an 'overlapping consensus', runs into the same objection as has been made to that: if there is no independent reason for being in favour of a secular state, what motive is there for trying to persuade religious believers that they are (even if they do not realize it) committed to one?

Moreover, it seems a rather desperate hope that a secular state is bound to be the locus of an 'overlapping consensus'. Partha Chatterjee thinks that there is a far better chance of agreement on an arrangement in which the different religious organizations carve up political authority in such a way that each religious community controls its own members according to its own rules. This would be a modernized version of the *millet* system that proved highly durable within the Ottoman empire. Some western political theo-

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rists call this 'pluralism' and contrast it with 'liberalism'. I believe that they are quite right to draw attention to the incompatibility between the two. By the same token, a pluralistic society of this kind, in which political power is handed over to religious authorities, cannot properly be described as any form of secularism. Rather, it is the institutionalization of religion. Chatterjee makes it clear that he himself sees his proposal as incompatible with secularism, which he defines as the idea 'that the state not involve itself in religious affairs or organizations' (p. 358).

'Toleration', Chatterjee says, 'would require one to accept that there will be political contexts where a group could insist on its right not to give reasons for doing things differently, provided it explains itself in its own chosen forum' (p. 375). His approach 'would start from the historically given reality of separate religion-based personal laws and the intricate involvement of state agencies in the affairs of religious institutions' (p. 375). State involvement will be accepted as fair, he suggests, when it accords with the self-understanding of groups. He shares this premise with Bilgrami but draws sharply different implications from it, and Bilgrami offers a spirited critique of Chatterjee (pp. 402–17).

Undeniably, Chatterjee's proposal for a state presiding over a set of politically organized religious communities would treat all religions symmetrically. This would make it an example of secularism on Amartya Sen's definition (p. 456), according to which symmetry is all that is required: the state can support religion or not, so long as it does on the same terms for all. Bhargava's 'contextualist' secularism seems to me to have some of the same properties.

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What could it mean to claim to be abolishing caste distinctions officially without insisting that all Hindus must be able to worship in any temple? Where some practice is at the core of the discrimination that the state has pledged itself to eliminate, the state must surely step in to ban it. But is this contrary to even the strictest interpretation of secularism as the separation of the state from religion?

This conception of secularism as symmetry is apparently quite deep-rooted. Thus, in a hostile review of D.E. Smith's *India as a Secular State*, Marc Galanter quotes him as complaining of 'the persistent tendency in present-day [i.e. 1963] India to define secularism simply in terms of non-discrimination in the promotion of religion... For most (Indians), the basis of the secular state is not a "wall of separation" between state and religion, but the "no-preference doctrine" which requires only that no special privileges be granted to any one religion' (p. 264 n. 63). Galanter himself says that 'Indian secularism does not conform to either of these patterns' (p. 264), but this way of putting it implicitly accepts that 'secularism' is going to be simply the name attached to whatever 'compromises and accommodations' (p. 264) among religions occur in India.

I have so far focussed on the fourth part of the book: 'Secularism in India: The Recent Debate'. This is also considerably the longest, amounting to seven of the fifteen chapters. The first part consists of a subtle and penetrating essay by T.M. Scanlon on 'Tolerance' which is tangentially related to secularism, and one by Charles Taylor on 'Modes of Secularism' which advocates the 'overlapping consensus' mode that I have already queried. Part two is entitled 'Secularism in the West', but I think its three items would leave any reader who knew nothing else about the subject with a rather odd notion of the ways in which predominantly Christian countries (which is what 'western' means here) have dealt with religion. Thus, the notion of a 'separation of church and state' has been most explicitly stated and worked out in the United States. But instead of an exposition of the Supreme Court's interpretation, we get a tendentious attack on it by Michael Sandel. The piece by Joseph Carens and Melissa Williams is also misleading as a guide to 'western' ideas and practices. Their recommendation that polygamy should be legalized and their claim that French *haute couture* is more limiting to women than the *hijab* (pp. 156 and 161) are best seen as rather desperate attempts to ride the bandwagon of Political Correctness that currently appears to be careering out of control in Canada. There is also a historically rich account by Jean Bauberot of the role played by the notion of laicité in France since the Revolution. While this is a first rate essay, it illustrates how peculiar France is within western Europe in the polarization of lay and religious (i.e. Roman Catholic) forces.

I have already mentioned D.E. Smith, and a substantial extract from his *India as a Secular State* leads off part three, entitled 'Secularism in India: The Early Debate'. The review of that book by Mark Galanter, from which I quoted earlier, follows this. The remaining piece is also by Galanter. Entitled 'Hinduism, Secularism, and the Indian Judiciary', its flavour is adequately captured in his description of 'the legal system' as 'provid[ing] a forum in which the aspirations of India's governing élite confront the ambitions and hopes of the component groups in Indian society' (p. 269). This way of putting the issue makes it impossible to imagine that there might be élites exploiting the ambitions and hopes of component groups as a means to furthering their own political ambitions or that the ideal of a secular state might have some resonance among those oppressed by their own religious community or fearful that the only alternative to a secular state is one riven by religious conflict.

This gets me back to part four, and I have already mentioned all the authors represented there. Rather than say more about them individually, I should like to conclude by pursuing a question that almost all of them bring up in one way or another. This is the question of the way in which the phenomenon of caste impinges on the idea of a secular state in the Indian context. Smith, for whom the United States is the model, not surprisingly finds a 'major problem for the secular state' in 'the extensive state interference in Hindu religious institutions' (p. 226). Among the examples which Smith gives is 'the admission of Harijans into Hindu temples' (p. 213). But could a state whose constitution commits it to the abolition of untouchability do any less?

Let us look at the attempt to eliminate by law another system of inequality ascribed at birth, that of racism in the United States. Obviously, policies adopted by public authorities that discriminated on a basis of race had to be barred. But that still left an equally important form of racism: discrimination by private employers, sellers and renters of property, and so on. The abolition of racism by law would have been a travesty without strong measures to attack such private discrimination.

In America, the 'separation of church and state' has inhibited legal measures that might have interfered with racially exclusive religious congregations. But in the great religious supermarket (as it has been described) of the USA, everybody can find something to suit them. 'Separate but equal' is not the cruel hoax in religion that it undeniably was in education, so racially exclusionary churches are not as obnoxiously discriminatory as might appear. Indeed, compulsory integration might well be resented by many all-black congregations.

Contrast with this the Indian case. What could it mean to claim to be abolishing caste distinctions officially without insisting that all Hindus must be able to worship in any temple? Where some practice is at the core of the discrimination that the state has pledged itself to eliminate, the state must surely step in to ban it. But is this contrary to even the strictest interpretation of secularism as the separation of the state from religion? A number of writers (quoted by Galanter in nn. 6 and 7, p. 271) regard it as axiomatic that it must be. But is this necessarily so?

Smith quotes the Supreme Court as saying in 1954: 'Suppose that one believed that human sacrifices were a necessary part of religious worship, would it be seriously contended that the civil government under which he lived could not interfere to prevent such sacrifice?' (p. 195). This would seem to cover *sati*. But since 1954, the Supreme Court has moved further to a position (to the chagrin of Sandel) such that religion does not count as an excuse for individuals or churches to behave in ways that there are sound public policy for prohibiting. In the context of a religion adhered to by eighty-five per cent of the population, would not the Supreme Court's reasoning lead to the conclusion that the elimination of untouchability is a sufficiently compelling objective of public policy to legitimate prohibiting the exclusion of a Hindu from worship in a temple? The point is that a secular state is not necessarily one that maximizes the freedom of religious organizations.

The issues raised by this book are of great moment: their urgency is if anything even greater than when the chapters were written. As an outsider, I have found this collection enormously enlightening and provocative. I am sure that those who are living nearer to the problems will not find it any less so. I hope, however, that if (as it deserves) the book goes into a second printing the publisher will ensure that the profuse typographical errors are fixed. Most are no more than distracting (though when they get to half a dozen per page that is quite a distraction), but some are more serious: for example Madan wrote that secularism is 'impotent' as a blueprint for India (p. 298) but is quoted later as saying that it is 'important' (p. 438)—rather a different proposition. The book also needs an index.

Brian Barry teaches at the London School of Economics.

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The Fall and Rise of Brahminical Order

Harish Khare

QUEST FOR POWER: OPPOSITIONAL MOVEMENTS AND POST-CONGRESS POLITICS IN UTTAR PRADESH

By Zoya Hasan

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 280, Rs. 445.00

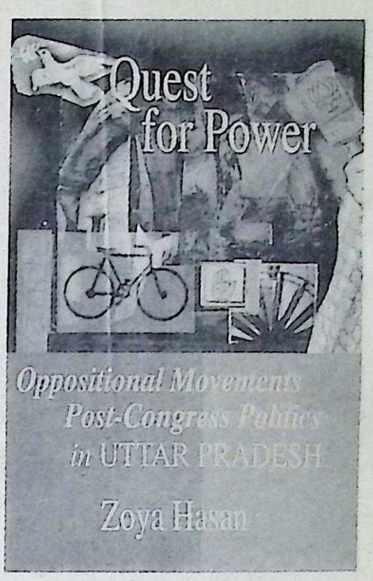
Two initiatives of the Vajpayee government attest to the correctness of the basic contentions in Zoya Hasan's book, a veritable *tour de force* of political change in Uttar Pradesh in the last two decades. First, the Atal Behari Vajpayee government's decision to reward K.C. Pant, everybody's favourite mediocre, with the chairmanship of the Task Force of the proposed National Security Council. The second was the Prime Minister Mr. Vajpayee's entirely unprovoked statement on the eve of Ambedkar Jayanti that his government had no intention of changing the existing reservation regime. If the first development brings home the tenacious ability of UP's upper caste-upper class combine to stay on top of the pile, the second underscores the clout the backward classes have come to wield. The BJP's ability to cater simultaneously to the demands from two contradictory sources is the story of the Sangh Parivar's rise to commanding heights in UP, and Zoya Hasan tells the story incisively.

Like the rest of the country, Uttar Pradesh too has witnessed changes—political, economic and social—which have variously expressed themselves in the idiom of class, caste and community; but, because of a number of characteristics peculiar to the State it is only in Uttar Pradesh that context over policies and power has resulted in so decisive a victory for majoritarian ideas and strategies. And given the very size of Uttar Pradesh and its centrality to national politics, the outcome of the contest has a definite bearing on the all-India equations.

The most fascinating part of the Uttar Pradesh story, as told by Zoya Hasan, is the continuing experimentation in strategic political choices made in order to maintain the upper caste-upper class (UCUC) combine's domination—that too in the face of the relentless logic of participatory democracy. As long as the Congress served the interests of the upper caste-upper class combine, it could not be challenged politically; and, the very dominance of this combine in the Congress leadership structure enfeebled the party in meeting the challenges posed by new forces, unleashed by structural changes (like half-hearted land reforms, zamindari abolition, etc.), by technological changes (green revolution), and by parliamentary democracy (like mobilization of backward castes). And what makes the UP story so fascinating is that the challenge to the UCUC combine invariably degenerated into a struggle over political power rather than any attempt to transform radically the State structure.

In fact, the UCUC combine controlled access to politics and policies, with the result that "zamindari abolition altered agrarian relations only to the extent of shifting the location of rural power from feudal to cultivating landowners." The first serious challenge to the Congress hegemony came from the new landed elite. When the green revolution brought prosperity to the backward caste cultivators, they began aspiring for social equality with the upper caste landlords. But the UCUC combine managed to tame the class potential of the farmers' movement and diverted its energies into a pure contest over political power, demanding a shift in the urban-rural balance in the allocation of resources. "Its ideologies distinguished the farmers' movement from peasant movements in the past on the grounds that earlier movements were class-based and thus divisive, whereas the farmers' movement stressed that the main conflict was between countryside and city."

The story of UP is also the story of the status quoist, reactionary, and Brahminical nature of Congress hegemony, the debilitating effect that hegemony had on the Congress capacity to accommodate new forces and voices as it had done for decades before and after 1947. Four converging features of the breakdown of the Congress control become discernible in Zoya Hasan's account. First, the developmental model had failed by the mid-1960s. The new "opportunity structures" simply could not satisfy new claimants to the piece.



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The UCUC combine could see to it that the land reforms did not take off, opposed rural taxation; and, therefore, when the food shortages, rising prices and increasing income disparities took hold of people's imagination, the Congress found itself limping. The middle class became alienated, and remained alienated. Second, the predominance the Brahmins enjoyed in the Congress prevented the party from acquiring sensitivity to the new aspirations. Zoya Hasan talks of "tremendous resilience and resourcefulness" of the upper caste-class coalition "whereas in Bihar, the intra-elite rivalries between Bhumihar and Rajput led subcoalitions had already become so bitter that by the early 1960s, the Congress Chief Minister was forced to turn to leaders of the upper backward castes, who commanded a substantial following. Rivalries within the ruling coalition in UP did not create similar opportunities for backward castes." Third, the central-oriented party control model, practised assiduously first by Indira Gandhi and later by Rajiv Gandhi, exhausted the Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders politically, psychologically and intellectually. The central leadership made demands of loyalty, obedience and conformity on the state leaders, compelling the UP Congress leaders to be more mindful of the mood in New Delhi rather than of the urges in Behariach or Gorakhpur or Kanpur. The inevitable result was that "state politics was no longer a decisive factor in determining leadership structures, whereas in the past leadership and policies had been the outcome of competition between factions at the state level." And, fourth, the governing model, sought to be put in place in the 1980s by the Congress, was obviously flawed. With all their presumed sagacity and wisdom and innovativeness. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi simply failed to anticipate, leave alone come up with effective counter-strategies, the challenge of the farmers' movement, the backward caste mobilization, and the Ayodhya/communalism project. The Congress system lost its legitimacy, efficacy and bite.

The strength of Zoya Hasan's analytical narrative is that she keeps coming back to the overarching theme of the debilitating toll the Brahmins took of the UP Congress, and it was this factor alone that opened up space for casteist and communal politics. She paints a damning picture of the Brahmins' total domination: "While nationally Indira Gandhi succeeded in identifying the Congress with the interests of the poor and the low castes, the state and district leadership of the Congress in UP became more of a Brahmin affair than ever before. In 1964, Sripat Misra's ministry was dominated by Brahmins and Thakurs. Of the 112 district magistrates and police chiefs in the state's fifty-four districts, the number of Brahmins was 44 compared to 30 before Mishra took over. Similarly, the number of Brahmins who were chairmen and managing directors of the forty public sector undertakings in the state had risen to 25 from 18. Nearly 70 per cent of the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service officers in 1980 were members of upper castes, while 52 per cent of the Provincial Civil Service were drawn from the same castes. The upper echelons of the bureaucracy were even more noticeably dominated by Brahmins who had been actively promoted by successive Brahmin chief ministers of the ruling Congress party." No wonder the party was found lacking in credibility when it pretended to be an advocate of an "all-inclusive", non-sectarian model; its very heavy Brahmanical baggage simply did not allow it the necessary flexibility to

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challenge the ideology of casteist appeal and communal discourse.

The Congress failure in Uttar Pradesh is all the more glaring because, as Zoya Hasan points out, there was not much of a political space for the BJP till the end of the 1980s. Except for making some inroads among the Ahirs and Kurmis in eastern and central UP, the BJP had yet to carve out a viable political constituency for itself. Unlike in Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan, the BJP was not the principal challenger to the Congress dominance; it was the Janata Dal which had cobbled a powerful coalition of the OBCs and the Muslims. "The important point is that the 1989 election did not reveal strong evidence of a Hindu vote in UP, despite the attempts of leading political parties to marshal support along those lines," writes Hasan.

The space for communal politics got created by the shoddy practices in statecraft in Delhi and Lucknow. While at the national level the Rajiv Gandhi regime took recourse to "pragmatic communalism", as Zoya Hasan describes it, the Janata Dal at the national and state levels simply could not summon the Administrative adroitness and political imagination to deal with the middle classes' violent disquiet over the Mandal initiative. "Mandal made more obvious the divisions and tensions within UP society. It was designed as an instrument of mobilization for the recognition of competing claims to power. Not surprisingly, it invited the most serious opposition from the advocates of political Hinduism." But it was the inept handling of violence that contributed "enormously to the delegitimization of the social justice platform", especially among the middle classes—the teacher-trader-lawyer-provincial civil servant nexus perfected by the BJP.

Compared to the uncertain tactics of the Congress and the Janata Dal, the BJP displayed considerable political innovativeness in diverting the anti-Mandal anxieties into the pro-Ramjanmabhoomi movement. For example, the BJP did not "openly condemn reservations for fear of losing its OBC base which was quite strong in UP. This mobilization was overtly anti-Mandal in western UP, but not so in eastern UP where reservations were a popular issue among the OBCs. The BJP weaned away from the Janata Dal the Kurmis and the Lodhs in central UP through the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation. In addition, it increased their representation in party leadership. As part of this strategy, it gave greater prominent to Kurmis and Lodh leaders—Vinay Katiyar from Faizabad and Kalyan Singh from Aligarh. The vertical divisions between Yadavs and Kurmis and Lodhs helped the BJP to stave off the challenge posed by the apparent cohesion of backward (sic) under the Mandal platform."

To its traditional appeal on the Hindi-Urdu controversy among the urban middle classes in the new medium towns, the BJP grafted the Ayodhya sentiment. Taking full advantage of the VHP mobilizational efforts, the BJP instigated the "political Hindu" sentiment, leading to the elaborate Hindu-Muslim violence. Attributing to the BJP leadership a deliberate policy of communal violence, Zoya Hasan notes perceptively that "riots created a deep wedge between communities and invented a political constituency for the BJP in towns such as Khurja and Bijnor where it had very little support before the riots of 1990... Communal violence enlarged the BJP's political base." The Hindi press played the role of a cheerleader as the BJP propagated "the ideology of exclusion" as well as actively and joyfully participated in the "demonization of Mulalaym Singh Yadav."

Like a master story teller, Zoya Hasan comes back to the original argument: the response of the upper caste-class coalition to the exacting demands of participatory democracy. "These classes, located in moffusil towns across the state, are themselves the product of economic change, but they are uncertain and apprehensive of further social transformation and fearful of the upsurge from below which could upset the status quo. It is uncertainties of this class that have been manipulated by the BJP in its pursuit of political power." And she makes a convincing case that while "there is no doubt the BJP reaped rich electoral dividends from the Ayodhya movement, its main appeal was to the insecurities of the upper castes who were willing to switch support after the decline of the Congress dominance to the BJP."

The story of the Congress decline, the failure of the backward castes to retain the upper hand, and the triumph of the BJP's communal project is a fascinating tale; Zoya Hasan has told the tale with analytical clarity and without the mandatory jargon. The only deficiency in the book is the rather perfunctory treatment of the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party. Still it is a book that ought to be read by every serious student of Indian politics, especially by those in the Congress who think that the restoration of the Dynasty would restore the party to the centre-stage of national politics.

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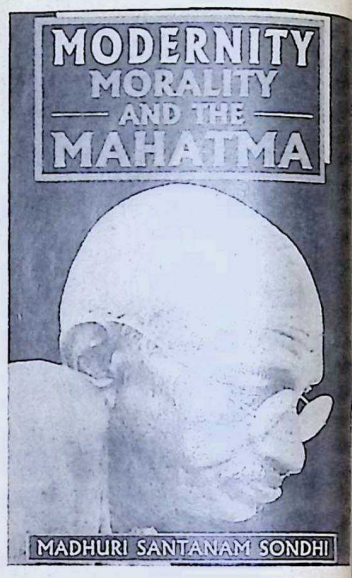
For A Better Civilizational Model

Rohini Mokashi Punekar

MODERNITY, MORALITY AND THE MAHATMA

By Madhuri Santanam Sondhi

Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 244, Rs. 395.00



Madhuri Santanam Sondhi's Modernity, Morality and the Mahatma is a deeply interesting study of the interface between western modernity and the modern Indian nation-state on the one hand and the Gandhian model of traditional decentralized local bodies of governance based on dharma on the other. The book is an impassioned plea for rethinking the paradigm that has governed Indian society and politics since independence, particularly since it seems to have failed in creating a shared discourse of ethical norms. The scope of the work is huge, straddling as it does, several kind of ethos contained in the East-West encounter over the past couple of centuries.

Beginning with an examination of modernity in the West the first chapter proceeds to look at the problematic of modernity in the Indian context: the impact of science and technology, the problems of democracy, nationalization and the nation-state and the loss of cultural and moral authority. Modernity assumes the centrality of the individual and it is with colonization that modernity seeped into Indian society, mainly through education and technology. The Indian middle classes 'who were both its creation and its apologists used their education to lead the national movement against the Raj and carried over the principles of individualism into the Constitution of independent India'. While modernization was welcomed by all parties, Left or Right, it was only Gandhi who mistrusted it and advocated a decentralized model based on traditional bodies of local governance, such as the panchayats an a primarily agrarian economy. This we researched chapter sees how 'Indi modernization has failed to take de root since it has no basis in receive culture unlike modernization in E rope which evolved out of religio questioning. As a result of the unsu ability of climate or the arbitrary way transferring a part of the packag modernization in India has resulted 'instrumentalism in interpersonal rel tions and casteism', corruption, ineffi ciency and apathy, the old order br ken and no new order in sight.

The second chapter 'The Gandhia Point of Departure' is an exhaustiv discussion of Gandhi's political ph losophy. Morality is the fulcrum which it rests and Sondhi points out relation to knowledge: in the Gandhia sense knowledge would mean a chang in perception, an illumination. There an excellent discussion on Gandhi an Socrates, usefully counterpointing th philosophical traditions of the East an the West. Both see the equation be tween knowledge and virtue, but wit

> "Independent India has suspended Gandhi, like Trishanku, midway between heaven and earth: he is debarred from serving as a role model since he is assessed as a super-normal human being (*generations to come will scarcely believe that such a man walked the earth—Albert Einstein*); at the same time he is not a proper deity, an *avatar*, and so has become for most a sterile icon. Returned to earth in his full humanity, however, he can become a creative dialogue partner. New political and social circumstances warrant new experiments, bearing in mind the Gandhian lesson that to be successful, politics needs to be normatively structured within the overall civilizational framework."
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> From *Modernity, Morality and the Mahatma*

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entirely different emphases: Gandhi as a step to right political action, Socrates content to prod change at the level of thought. While the examination of Gandhi's political concepts such as ahimsa, dharma, satyagraha, swadeshi and sarvodaya are deeply interesting, the recognition of some of the contradictions/areas of dissent emerging from them is equally thought-provoking. For instance, the challenge of finding the balance between the morally responsible (dharmic) individual with the space required for his conscience and the demands of cooperative community life. But by far the greater problem is Gandhi's perception of caste. To retain varna but reject jati is to invite difficulties of praxis, even assuming the acceptance of the basic premise of varna. Gandhi approved of the cohesion in village communities which came as a result of varna, but deeply disapproved of the hierarchy and ritual that jati enjoined. If it is the acceptance of structural inequality that holds communities together can the solution lie only in altering the perception and practice of inequality (as Gandhi believed) without structural changes? Such radical changes endanger community cohesiveness—as is happening today. There is no easy solution. But the examination of western modernity, concludes Sondhi, does bring home the urgent importance of building communities.

The third chapter looks at two of Gandhi's contemporaries and their perhaps more philosophic attitudes to modernity, namely Aurobindo and B.K. Mallik, in an attempt to place Gandhi in the context of his times. Parts of this chapter are fascinating; the analysis of Mallik's ethics of abstention is particularly good. If Gandhi's non-articulated basic assumption in the concept of Satyagraha is the inevitability of conflict, Mallik advocates abstention from conflict, since there can be no absolutist position. 'No absolute value is self-justifying and its adoption is the result of necessity—the practical necessity of finding a workable thesis for organizing society. Mallik, in a way, looks forward to post-modernism, specifically the recent theories on dialogue as a way of resolving conflict and enabling complete communication. His philosophic-evolutionary theory of history, moving through large circular macro-schemes too forsees the post-modernist breakdown of meta-narratives.

The last chapter, where Sondhi considers Gandhian alternatives in ethical dynamism for a future society seems to rework considerable areas from the previous chapters—a sense of weariness is inevitable. Modernity, one may be excused in feeling, cannot, in all rationality, be everlastingly the villain of the piece. Had the chapter attempted to examine the creative encounters between Gandhian thought and modernity (after all Gandhi did appreciate the space available to him as an individual to negotiate with authority) it might have done more in the way of establishing meaningful connections for the help of the present and future societies.

The book could have been organized more ruthlessly: the depth of research and the writer's obvious commitment to the cause have perhaps lengthened the study and made repetitions inevitable. The production could definitely have been better—the proof-reading has been lax to say the least. These are, of course minor charges. What really matters is the significant connections the book has managed to make for all of us in this last decade of the twentieth century and its timely reminder of the importance of Gandhi for a better civilizational model.

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It is because Gandhi's understanding of religion was so deeply embedded in notions of universal truth and morality that he confidently reversed the modern separation of religion from politics. Modernity treats religion as conventional sectarianism, and substitutes for it a humanistic ethics in the public sphere. This is not least the result of the European experience with its peculiar history of Christian governance and schismatic wars. Despite the fact that modernity's secular philosophy has failed to definitively establish ethics, this traumatic past is a constant barrier to recovery of religion in the public sphere. As a born Hindu, on the other hand, Gandhi was heir to the civilizational complexity of Hinduism, in which individual, caste, social and conventionally religious norms all interpenetrate and reflect one another through the prism of *dharma*. It is extremely difficult in such a society to search for hard and fast divisions between the religious and the social. One may quote the common truism that Hinduism is a way of life, rather than a religion reserved for weekends.

From *Modernity, Morality and the Mahatma*

Terrorism:

Strategy of the Weak Or a Calculated Option

Ved Marwah

TACKLING INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM: BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

By Col. Bhaskar Sarkar VSM

Vision Books, 1998, pp. 156, Rs. 280.00

The book under review covers too large an agenda to adequately discuss the main issues raised by the author. Sarkar makes a number of controversial statements, but neither substantiates nor discusses them. They are not based on any study or research, but on his personal convictions. Nor does he draw from his own experience in handling problems of terrorism and insurgency. Sarkar was a military engineer by profession. The book has been written more in the style of a handbook for training army officers than for general reading. The author tends to oversimplify complex problems. A book on a subject like this from a retired army officer raises high expectations, but this one is likely to disappoint both the army officers and lay readers. The author has nevertheless done a service by publishing this book and focussing attention on this important subject, which is not getting as much attention as it should, either from the government or from the informed sections of society.

Col. Bhaskar Sarkar, VSM (Retd)

Sarkar has rightly emphasized the fact that terrorism and insurgency cannot survive without the support of the people. Terrorists need public support "to obtain supplies, money, shelter, recruits and intelligence". It is this support which has to be neutralized if counter-terrorism strategy is to succeed. And this objective cannot be achieved, as Sarkar rightly points out, if the security forces by their overzealous actions themselves alienate the people and thus generate sympathy and support for the terrorists. But the statement that "terrorism is the strategy of the weak" is debatable. Terrorism can, and often is, a deliberate and calculated option exercised even by a strong enemy. It offers many advantages over the other options. It is not only cost effective as compared to conventional wars, but also gives the sponsors the advantage of denying their involvement, and thus warding off the hostile reactions of the international community. Another advantage is that unlike conventional wars, low-intensity surrogate terrorist wars are always fought in the enemy's territory without any apparent risk to their own people.

Sarkar's point that state terror never pays is a valid one. The use of such methods by the state cannot be justified. They should never form part of a counter-terrorism strategy. They can be counter-productive in the long run. "Torturing suspects for information, harassment through detention without sufficient cause, destructions of food stocks, imposition of collective fines and reprisals in the form of looting, burning or raping for attacks on the security forces" cannot be justified on practical, legal or moral grounds. Apart from giving the country a bad name, the use of such methods can alienate a large section of the population and destroy the morale and discipline of the armed forces. But the author appears to be ambivalent in his thinking. At more than one place in the book he is very complimentary to the former Punjab Police Chief, K.P.S. Gill. He gives him all the credit for controlling the situation in Punjab, but does not discuss Gill's strategy and methods to combat terrorism.

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No one can disagree with Sarkar's suggestion that "action against organized crime and their illegal private armies must be the first step in containing and crushing insurgency and terrorism", but the only step that he suggests, that is to raise the penalty for possession of illicit arms to life imprisonment, is not likely to achieve the desired objective. This commonly-held view is based on misperception and betrays ignorance of the way the criminal justice system operates in our country. In criminal cases where the penalty is very high, the general tendency of the courts is to grant acquittals, because they demand in such cases a much higher quality of evidence. The result is that they tend to give the benefit of doubt to the accused and acquit him. Enhancement of the penalty seldom acts as a deterrent. This fact has been amply demonstrated in the case of drug-traffic cases. The enhancement of punishment in the amended Act has had little or no effect on the use of traffic in drugs. What acts as a deterrent is the certainty of punishment, and not the enhancement of punishment.

The author has devised a novel scorecard method to analyze various ongoing insurgencies and terrorist movements in India. The score card contains marks for factors like popular support, quality of leadership, military efficiency, internal unity, equipment, terrain, and availability of sanctuaries. These factors are, no doubt, relevant, but the manner of allotment of marks under each head lacks objective basis. A subjective assessment, as done by the author, can be more misleading than helpful in analyzing the situation. His analysis of the problem in different parts of the country, particularly in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir is not very convincing and, apparently, not based on practical experience or study and research.

Sarkar makes a rather sweeping statement when he says that "if civil administration is unable to handle the task it should be handed over to the army". He does not appreciate the complexity of the task and the difficulties the army would face if it were to take over all the responsibility of the civil administration, even if it is for a short period. His suggestion that the army commander should directly function under the Chief Minister is not a practical one. Again, he has not thought through his suggestion that "when the army is deployed, it will have to control over state police and paramilitary forces". He does not discuss the practical problems of such a unified command, like the army is at present facing in Assam. The work-culture of the police and the army is so different. The problem of coordination will not be solved by the so-called unified command.

While discussing the surrender policy for the terrorists, Sarkar makes a suggestion which no civilized government can accept. The hardcore terrorists "can be forced to commit suicide or killed in fake encounters". He does not discuss the pros and cons of such a policy, and calls it an "effective though hardly civilized" policy. His definition of the hard core: "those who join the organization on ideological or personal considerations", is inadequate and unacceptable. But the author has rightly emphasized that there is no quick-fix solution to terrorism and insurgency. "Excessive emphasis on quantitative and quick results are generally counter-productive as it alienates the population".

One of the weaknesses of the book is that even though some data has been given, at no place is the source cited. One hopes that the data is based on reliable sources and not on the subjective assessment of the author. His suggestion of establishing a "college for counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism warfare" is a sound one, but one cannot understand why he insists on its establishment only in Madhya Pradesh. Maybe Sarkar has sound reasons for choosing Madhya Pradesh, but he does not take the reader into confidence about his reasons.

One of his many controversial suggestions is the regrouping of villages to tackle terrorism and insurgency. According to the author, "the measure is extremely unpopular, but it is perhaps the only effective way of denying support to militants in the sensitive border area of Jammu and Kashmir". He acknowledges the fact that the measure failed to achieve its objective and had to be abandoned in Mizoram, but he does not discuss how it is going to succeed in Jammu and Kashmir, where resistance from the local population will be even stronger.

The book ends with yet another controversial suggestion. He makes a rather well-meaning suggestion that special courts should be constituted to try those accused of terrorist and secessionist act. But he goes further and makes the suggestion that the judges for these courts should be hired from abroad so that their impartiality cannot be questioned. He does not discuss the negative implications of his suggestion.

The book is overpriced and hastily written. It leaves the reader dissatisfied. Moreover, the many repetitions in the slim volume could have been avoided with better editing.

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Addressing Discrepancies Between Empiricism and Theory

R. Gopinath

MEANINGS OF AGRICULTURE

Edited by Peter Robb

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, pp. 389, Rs. 495.00

Social science has perceived its subjects through a set of methodological conventions and stereotypes. The resultant lack of fit between theory and empirical reality and between the terminology of our disciplines and that of its subjects has led to a continuous process of methodological revisions. This collection of twelve essays edited by Peter Robb on meanings of agriculture in South Asia addresses this very conundrum—the discrepancies between empirical descriptions of South Asian agriculture and generalized theoretical assumptions about agrarian change and policy.

The three issues around which the volume is organized are the kinds of knowledge relating to agriculture, the 'kinds of agriculture' or to use less fashionable terms the organization and relations of production and finally the different purposes of agriculture. After providing a critical summary of each of the contributions, Robb returns to the vexed problem of relating the wealth of micro-details with that of general theory. He is careful not to discount the significance of either for both historical reconstruction and policy formulation. Robb once again repeats the dictum of modern historical scholarship that local empirical circumstances must continually modify the larger theories of change. One common point which emerges from the present collection written from the vantage points of large generalizing formulations and those emphasizing detail, according to Robb, is that prescriptions of market economics do not relate to the actual experience of most Indian cultivators; "...to apply them is to run the risk of, at best, serious dislocation and suffering, whether or not they improve the Indian economy" (p. 33).

The first article on archaic forms of agricultural knowledge in South India by David Ludden tries to show how the terminologies of agriculture changed in the course of the classical, medieval and colonial periods. The general argument of movement being from heterogeneity and multivocality to a universalizing 'scientific' discourse with the growth of commodity production and the increased intrusion of the State in the countryside in the colonial period. This a theme which has been dealt with earlier, particularly by Nicholas Dirks discussion of changing terminology and early colonial 'scientific' mapping of the Tamil country. Ludden assumes that the differences in the incidence of presently available agricultural proverbs are positively correlated with actual variations in agricultural knowledge in different regions. This assumption seems to be a bit hasty and rash given the large gaps in our access to locally generated historical artefacts.

Benedicte Hjejle takes up a theme somewhat related to Ludden's concern in her discussion of Indian and British conceptions of agrarian Vishakhapatnam and the changes that occurred in agricultural production during the period of transition to Company rule. Based on very rich empirical information she first argues for a variety of land use patterns in Vishakhapatnam focussing on the historical significance of local agrarian controllers in the wider agrarian economy. She highlights the role of marginal land in the region's agriculture, the ecological determination of land use, the role of local land controllers, and the susceptibility of early official statistics to manipulation. Her main point is that the intervention of Company rule led to the displacement of traditional land controllers by new groups—non-agricultural groups of merchants and officials resulting in social fragmentation and declining agricultural productivity.

On the question of commercialization in Indian agriculture, Binay Bhushan Chaudhuri provides a carefully nuanced criticism of the models

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'forced' commercialization and price driven change based on the experience of indigo and in eastern India. Chaudhuri argues that the different trends within the agricultural historiography of Indian agricultural commercialization have inadequately stressed the distinctive peasant perceptions in this context. Highlighting peasants' perceptions according to him serves as a check to the biases of explanations based on relative price movements and 'forced' change. He is critical of these explanations as they have misrepresented the process of change in some crops and have erred in taking peasant dependence on dominant groups as an immutable fact. On the question of 'advances' Chaudhuri makes the important point that their role varied for different crops. He also points to the fact that in this discussion, consumption loans and production loans of peasants tend to get confounded and the existence of multiple sources of credit made forcing of advances on a dependent peasantry more problematic. The emphasis on peasant manoeuvres to increase their share in a context marked by subordination permits introducing of variations and movements in connection between conjunctions of market forces and possibilities for changing configurations of agrarian power, a theme not examined by theories of 'forced' commercialization.

Another contribution on a similar theme is Rajat Dutta's examination of the 'dynamics of peasant production and agrarian commercialism in eighteenth-century Bengal'. Dutta emphasizes the point that agrarian commercialism in Bengal can be understood only from the standpoint of regionally integrated market. He sees the Bengal rice cultivators' behaviour to be in tune with the attributes of a rational profit-maximizing peasant. Peasants responded positively to relative prices and so did tenurial relations move in tune with agricultural output and price changes. The limits to peasants' choices and the varied role of intermediaries and sharecroppers in responding to prices could have been elaborated profitably.

Eric Meyer's discussion of varied cultivation regimes and peasant strategies raises the central question of how the Kandyan peasant negotiated dramatic changes in the region's agriculture with the opening up of plantations. Meyer highlights the various purposes which different lands within a village were put to and how this pattern was disrupted under colonial rule. Both the colonial state and later nationalist discourse privileged paddy cultivation over *chena* or 'slash and burn' agriculture. It is argued that this misunderstanding of the role of *chena* and settled cultivation led to a number of tensions including the ethnic conflict in the north and east Sri Lanka. Meyer provides a good discussion of how different strategies pursued by the various groups and their outcomes were premised upon their respective understanding of agriculture.

Another paper that focuses on the disruptive effects of colonial intervention on the village economy is the Sivakumars' study of long term change in the agrarian society of Tondaimandalam. Embellished with the terminology of recent institutional economics the paper argues that colonial rule forced a disjuncture between local and external production contexts. The site of transaction costs and power were removed from the village to the State. This process initiated under colonialism continued into the post-independence period. The Sivakumars' assert that with the growth of centralization, external forces broke down communal arrangements for village level production leading to the impoverishment of agricultural labour and slow economic growth. The authors describe in detail the ties of interdependence between employer and employee, the close connection of this system of economic production with the caste and belief systems and the available resources. However, in their description of pre-colonial structures' interdependence, for instance, the ritual of managed employer-worker disputes and their reconciliation, one gets the impression that structures of 'dependence' and exploitation tend to have received less attention than required.

Three other papers by Ravi Srivastava, Karin Kapadia and Sumit Guha deal with different aspects of agricultural labour. Srivastava looks at agrarian transition from the vantage point of systematic changes in the labour process in two villages in western and south-eastern Uttar Pradesh. The case study brings out clear contrasts in the landlord-labour relations in the more and less developed villages. In the faster changing village, landlords have resorted to switching to piece-rates and letting land seasonally to poor families. Closer landlord control over production and the mechanism of debt have been used here replacing older forms of employer-employee relations. In the more traditional and less dynamic village dominance, subordination and extra-economic coercion continue to play an important role in labour dynamics. The main point made in the paper is that 'surplus appropriators may make use of existing modes of surplus appropriation in very different ways, leading to different outcomes' (p. 249).

Sumit Guha's paper on the meaning and measurement of labour in Indian agriculture sharply disputes analyses of Indian agriculture based on homogenous notions of labour-time. Guha deconstructs agricultural work distinguishing between those involved in the different operations and the varied nature of work itself. His main point is that 'labour-time would be a very imperfect measure of work done in Indian agriculture. . .' (p. 260). Instead, he proposes that labour inputs be measured in terms of units based on actual or imputed cost for different kinds of labourers. Despite the limitations of this method, Guha considers this vastly superior to attempts to measure labour time.

Karin Kapadia studies labour contracts and female labour in a village in Tiruchi district of Tamilnadu. She observes a shift from time rates to piece rates. This shift is associated with greater exploitation, lower supervisory costs and a tendency towards an apparent self-disciplining among piece-rate workers.

The last two articles are very different from the rest of the contributions. Written by economists they look at the significance of international ramifications and hegemonic external linkages for Indian agriculture. Utsa Patnaik's paper on peasant subsistence and food security in the context of the international commoditization of production is a sharp indictment of colonialism and its parallels in the contemporary context.

Patnaik first argues that 'expanding exportables to meet the market demand of the North is at the expense necessarily of lowering domestic absorption in poor tropical countries' (p. 291). Forced commercialization, falling per capita food availability (in the context of a switch from food to exportable commercial crops), high revenue demand in cash, unilateral transfers of wealth from India and extreme food insecurity are some of the features offered to explain colonial Indian agriculture. Finally, it is argued that 'structural adjustment policies' under World Bank-IMF supervision that insist on increased agro-exports have actually led to falling per capita food production in poor countries. Patnaik's discussion of the colonial economy could have paid more attention to historical variations and detail. On page 302 she writes that the long run shift from staples to exportables and a declining trend in per capita food availability aggravated by the deteriorating international terms of trade in the inter-war period provided for a 'pre-famine conjuncture', i.e., 'increased vulnerability with larger numbers of rural classes in poverty. . . 'If this indeed was the case, then how does one explain the trend decline in mortality after 1921 (or slightly earlier if we disregard the excess mortality caused by the influenza epidemic) in India?

In a well-argued paper on agriculture and liberalization, Abhijit Sen critically evaluates the prescriptions of the World Bank for agricultural growth in India. Like Patnaik, Sen also sees gloomy prospects ahead for Indian agriculture. Increased prices, slower output growth and greater income disparities are foreseen if India continues on its World Bank dictated path of structural adjustment.

In the 1950s and 1960s, economic and social historians were attracted by more or less determinist models of historical explanation. Today, however, it has been replaced by models which emphasize the freedom of choice of ordinary people, their perceptions, their strategies, their capacity to exploit the inconsistencies of social and political systems. The majority of articles in this collection make an important advance in this direction.

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Crying for Milk

I. Qadeer

MILK, MONEY AND MADNESS: THE CULTURE AND POLITICS OF BREAST FEEDING

By Naomi Baumslag and Dia L. Michels

The Other India Press, Goa, 1995, pp. 256, Rs. 175.00

The Other India Press has done a commendable job in bringing out this 256 page, neat, well-illustrated and equally well-argued book entitled, *Milk, Money and Madness: The Culture and Politics of Breast Feeding*. The authors, Naomi Baumslag and Dia L. Michels, have chosen to deal with a very peculiar type of madness. Madness that spurts thoughtless destruction and callous disregard for innocent lives through market forces that measure value only as money.

In an atmosphere of uncritical acceptance of any and all medical advice, this book is a reminder that human history helps us to locate technology and professionalism in their proper context; that often destruction of traditional practices is not the result of their lack of value for human survival, but because they hinder the forward march of capitalism. Divided into three main parts, the book deals with some critical issues related to breast-feeding. The importance of these is pointed out by Richard Jolly, who commends the authors' efforts in his Foreword. The first part of the book, "Breast-feeding: Beliefs and Practices", reviews people's perceptions and practices, both at present and in the past. It unravels the variations in child rearing and feeding practices in traditional societies and

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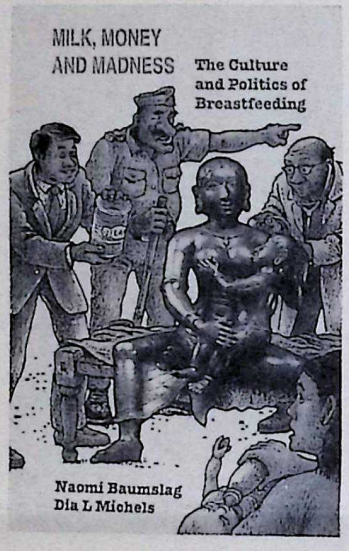
Even for those who are familiar with the debate, the book has some surprises. It is interesting, informative, and thought-provoking. Its use of rare paintings and photographs from museums and libraries not only provides lucid illustrations but also substantive evidence. It should be read by all, specially those involved with caring for babies, personally or professionally.



their common concern with breast-feeding. It also deals with the nature of transition in this singularly critical practice that contributed to human survival and the ensuing problems in the contemporary West. The authors contribute at two levels. Firstly, by showing the social significance given to breast-feeding till the 18th century, they forcefully bring forth the fact that it was the most natural, effective, valuable and simple way of caring for babies for a very long time; that distortions and doubts regarding its feasibility and effectivity are not even a century old. Secondly, the practice of artificial feeding evolved not for babies who had mothers but for those who had lost them.

Phenomenally high infant mortality of the 17th and 18th century was not simply due to poor public health. The young mothers from the poor classes abandoned, neglected, or handed over their own babies to foundling hospitals to be able to seek out jobs as wet nurses. The women from the elite classes, on the other hand, gave up breast-feeding in order to fulfil their social and wifely duties. The notions of beauty and sexuality got interlinked with virgin breasts and the advantages of feeding their own babies were ignored, as wet nurse became easily available. The 18th century foundling hospitals, meant to take care of the poor and abandoned babies, thus became the infernos where recorded mortality was as high as 80-90 per cent. It was this that became the inspiration for manufacturing formula food for babies. The book shows that though social and technological evolution of the 18th and 19th century expanded the scope of "possibilities" for women, the choices given to them did not include work along with nurturing their infants.

The second part, "Breast Milk: The Miracle Food and Medicines", is a collection of evidence that shows the superiority of breast milk and sets it apart from all other artificially prepared or "humanized" milks. The most important feature that the authors emphasize is the specificity and the live nature of breast milk. Its variation with time of the day, maturity and need of the baby, its immunologically protective nature, its richness in cellular content, easy assimilability of fats and proteins makes breast milk unique. The authors rightly point out that the fear generated by the possibility of transfer of toxins or infections through breast-feeding may be real but it is a part of the general risk that we generate for ourselves by destroying our environment, and not the process of breast-feeding itself. The authors also discuss the value of breast-feeding for maternal health: an extremely valuable dimension that is mostly neglected and distorted into "a negative nutritional impact", which again, is more a creation of poverty rather than breast-feeding.

The process of commercialization of infant feeding is then reviewed. Starting with companies producing formula food for foundling hospitals in the 18th century, it soon became obvious to the entrepreneurs that they could push the markets further. Thus, first the elite and then the newly emerging middle classes, became their targets. The milk industry not only became a lucrative business, it also expanded into providing alternative containers. The evolution of a feeding bottle and the rubber nipple has an equally revealing history.

The first two parts of the book, though useful, leave some space for avoiding repetitions and further consolidating evidence. At times the line between perspective and evidence becomes thin. Also lacking is a consistent analysis of the past and present of specific regions and the linkages over time, as the text moves from one part of the globe to another.

Part three, "Breast Milk Economies: Shaping Corporate and Governmental Policies", highlights the industry's relentless search for markets and profits. When the markets in the West were

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won or the users began questioning the formulae, attention was turned to the weak and more gullible countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America where banned and unpopular products were easily dumped and sold. A major boost to their sales in the West was the public health revolution which brought down infant mortality and provided a cover up for the harm that artificial feeding did. Evidence is presented that in France, in just one region, infant mortality could be brought down to zero between 1893 to 1903 by strictly banning all propaganda and promotion of artificial feeding.

In this process of commercialization of infant survival, a key role was played by medical professionals. They converted exceptions into rules, used their authority and power to manipulate and consistently refused to look at evidence or initiate research in desirable directions. This great partnership between the industry and the "learned men to protect babies from foolish unlearned women" performed two functions. It shifted responsibility away from single practitioners involved in preparing artificial feeds for babies under their care. When a baby on formula food died the physician could no more be held responsible, as now the mother prepared the formula. Secondly, the formula sold carried no labels or directions for use except for advising its use under medical supervision. Hence, infant feeding was medicalized without the medical profession being responsible. With the invention of refrigeration, means of transport, storage, better handling and finally pasteurization, the hold of this partnership became stronger. The most obvious common sense knowledge was subordinated to the interests of a few. Sufficient evidence is produced by the authors of this link between doctors who ran Milk Stations of the late 18th and early 19th centuries and the companies

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that produced formula feeds and supplementary foods.

There were, no doubt, exceptions among the medical professionals who practised differently and promoted breast-feeding. They had to struggle against arguments of "liberation of women" and their "modernization", free samples provided by the companies, and liberal aid of food supplements in the name of child care! By 1970 however these activists were able to consolidate themselves to fight the famous case against Nestle's and start working towards the WHO code for baby food. The book offers a fascinating account of the arguments and counter-arguments, the politics behind the scenes, and the mechanisms of manipulation adopted by the all-powerful industry. The fact that the saner voices won and the WHO adopted a code in 1981 is certainly not the final step and the struggle must continue to translate this guideline into legislation and widespread practice. The authors focus on the prevailing conflict between the social necessity of breast-feeding and the dilemma of a nursing, working woman who is given no social support or security to pursue this practice. The Scandinavian countries have taken the lead in this matter but the others are far, far behind.

In the Third World, the penetration of market forces—into all regions and all domains of social and personal life—only increases the dangers. The urban areas are the first to succumb but, with increasing urbanization, migration, the expansion of communications, and a class of medical professionals bred on the supremacy of technological knowledge, the rural populations are also becoming vulnerable. The authors argue that, when in the West 25–40 per cent of the GDP is contributed by the labour of women involved in households (as assessed by market cost methods), this proportion will be higher for women in the Third World. Offering them work security during pregnancy and lactation, therefore, should be part of the employer's responsibility.

Even for those who are familiar with the debate, the book has some surprises. It is interesting, informative, and thought-provoking. Its use of rare paintings and photographs from museums and libraries not only provides lucid illustrations but also substantive evidence. It should be read by all, specially those involved with caring for babies, personally or professionally.

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The Unmaking of Genocide

Niranjan S. Karnik

THE RWANDA CRISIS: HISTORY OF A GENOCIDE

By Girard Prunier

Hurst & Company, 1995, pp. 389, (PB), $ 13.50

During his recent tour through Africa, US President Bill Clinton officially apologized on behalf of Americans and the international community for failing to recognize the genocide that was occurring in Rwanda during 1994. As an observer of this region and a critic of US policy, I must confess to some degree of shock and anger with the President. During his March 25th speech in Kigali, Clinton claimed that "we did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide. We cannot change the past. But we can and must do everything in our power to help you build a future without fear, and full of hope."[1] Nice words but lacking in some degree of sincerity given the tour's intent and the Administration's past decisions regarding Africa. First, one of the purposes of Clinton's trip to Africa was to build new trade links with a region of the world where the US has little or no economic contact. France and the European colonial powers have historically had strong trade connections with Africa especially Francophone Africa.

Second, White House spokespersons in May 1994 "were instructed not to use the word 'genocide' in referring to Rwanda."[2] Both through the threat of Security Council vetoes and strategic denial, the Clinton Administration avoided getting involved in Rwanda and even prevented the label of 'genocide' from being used at several levels.

The natural inclination might be to look to international statute for definitions of genocide and see if and how Rwanda's case might or might not fit the definitions.[3] Such a course, while potentially useful and productive, is unlikely to resolve the issue. The Clinton Administration's power to deny a genocide by fiat demands another approach—one which recognizes the dynamics of power and the role of history. In looking for a good history of the Rwandan tragedy perhaps the best and most complete source can be found in Girard Prunier's *The Rwanda Crisis: History of A Genocide*. Prunier, originally a specialist on Uganda, was driven to this work by witnessing the tragedies that befell his friends in the region and the need for a comprehensive history of events in the region.

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Beginning with a brief discussion of the precolonial period and continuing forward through the events of 1994, Prunier expertly teases out the major factors which brought about the conditions which enabled the genocide. Early in this book he shows how Belgian colonial authorities transformed Rwanda's governance and social structures to favour certain groups. Throughout his discussion the terms Hutu and Tutsi continually appear as important tribal, ethnic, and political divisions. While the American media became fixated on the tribal aspect of the conflict, Prunier depicts events more complexly by showing how political motivations turned some members of a tribe against their own members. In reading this far more nuanced portrait of events it becomes clear that these tribal labels do not represent some "pure" ethnic demarcations and instead are group terms which have been mediated by generations of colonialism and political influence. These terms still have a great deal of veracity and power but this does not mean that they contain some essential explanatory value in and of themselves.

Prunier also traces the complicity of countries like France and Uganda. Moving against the academic and nationalist grain of his home country, France, Prunier details the ways that the French armed and supported the Hutu regime. He shows how the Hutu government leaders appealed to France's fears of Anglo-American cultural and economic domination of Africa. Members of the French government came to see the Uganda-supported Tutsi exiles as drifting toward the Anglophone world and thus threatening French interests in the region. Clinton's trip seen in this light may be either a victory tour for the Anglophone world and/or a new threat to France. In the wake of the Cold War, will these new regional economic rivalries between allies be the cause of civil unrest? Only time will tell.

On 6 April 1994 a plane carrying the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down on its return journey from a peace meeting. This event marked the beginning of the most recent cycle of violence in Rwanda that resulted in nearly 1 million dead and in excess of 2 million fleeing into asylum. One of the lessons we learn from Prunier is the key role that refugees and diasporas play in the events of Rwanda. He shows how civil wars in the 1960s and 70s, and unrest in the 1980s and 1990s caused successive waves of migration which scattered Rwandans across the globe. Later these diasporas funded, armed, and in many cases returned to directly participate in military actions against the reigning regimes in attempts to reclaim the country or at least parts of it.

This is not to excuse the governments which led Rwanda. In their own way they discriminated against certain groups and fed dangerously volatile sentiments into the populace. Senior government officials misused international development and humanitarian aid to line their own pockets and further impoverished the country. In addition, the government actively jailed political dissidents, and ordered executions in defiance of international human rights standards which further marginalized the groups they feared.

As comprehensive as Prunier's book is, there are still some stories which get

1 Clinton, William, "Clinton's Painful Words of Sorrow and Chagrin," *The New York Times*, March 26 1998: A12.

2 Weiner, Tim, "Critics Say U.S. Ignored C.I.A. Warnings of Genocide in Rwanda," *The New York Times*, March 26 1998: A12.

3 Desthexe, Alain, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

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only scant attention. For example, the Canadian economist Michel Chossudovsky[4] has shown how the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), working in concert, removed all the economic safety net programme in Rwanda's agricultural sector. A 1980s downturn in the coffee market then plunged much of the country into famine and terrible desperation. These events while not directly leading to genocide did lay a basis for it to thrive.

Prunier's history is thus a history of major actors—individuals, political parties, and governments. These are perhaps the most salient actors to examine in this genocide but they are hardly the only actors. Many other forces play into the activities of Rwanda, some from quite far. The increasingly globalized world has a dark side in which the mild mannered economic decisions in Washington and policy positions in Paris can affect a small country in central Africa. As one looks more closely at the aftermath of Rwanda it is clear that these actors sitting in distant offices can produce these effects due to their relative power. They even have the ability to deny that a genocide is occurring as a million people die.

[4]Chossudovsky, Michel, "Economic Genocide in Rwanda," *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 13 (1996): pp. 938–41.

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Two Colossi of Indian Industry

Sanjaya Baru

THE JOY OF ACHIEVEMENT: CONVERSATIONS WITH J.R.D. TATA

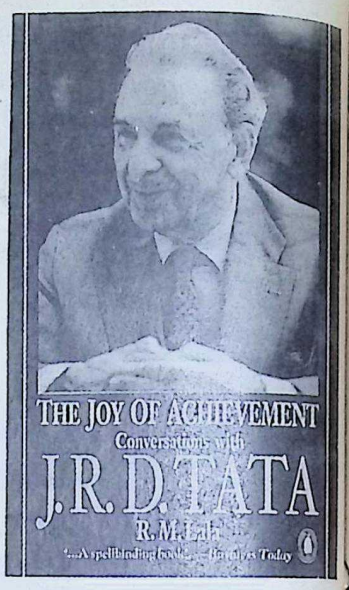
By R.M. Lala

Viking Penguin India, 1995, pp. 190, Rs. 190.00

GODREJ: A HUNDRED YEARS, 1897–1997: VOLUME 1

By B.K. Karanjia

Viking Penguin India, 1997, pp. 264, Rs. 295.00



All great personalities in Hindu mythology and Indian history have been depicted as complex characters—men of virtue and vice, wisdom and pettiness, gracious and jealous, sacred and profane, spiritual and materialistic. Even Maryada Purushottam Ram is shown to have human frailties, sometimes wimpish and given to self-righteousness. Bhagwan Krishna is an altogether human person, wise and cunning, generous and mischievous, just and libidinous. When great sages, poets and historians have never worried about portraying our Gods and Kings as morally complex beings, why do mere biographers of businessmen insist on hagiography?

Whether in Gita Piramal's *Business Maharajahs*, or in R.M. Lala's biography of J.R.D. Tata (*Beyond the Last Blue Mountain, 1992*), or the biographies of Lala Shriram, Seth Walchand Hirachand, G.D. Birla and so on, we are always offered one-dimensional perspectives of patriotic businessmen, talented entrepreneurs, hard-working corporate citizens, creating wealth, doing their nation proud, building business empires, living civilized lives and concerned about humanity and the future of man. What about all the corporate wars, the clash of tycoons, the cutting of corners, the No. 2 accounts, the unions bashed, the politicians bribed, and the women seduced? Businessmen are human beings. They work while they work—sometimes hard, sometimes not—and play while they play—sometimes with the boys, sometimes with the girls—and that's the way they stay healthy, wealthy and gay.

Give us a break, Mr Lala and Mr Karanjia. We are sure the Godrejs and the Tatas, like the Birlas and the Ambanis, are extraordinary people and have done a lot of good for their businesses, for the nation and for mankind. But biographies become interesting when they give the smooth with the rough, the sweet with the bitter, the hurrahs with the punches. Neither book under review does justice to their undoubtedly great personalities.

We now know from Mr. Lala's latest offering (*Conversations with J.R.D. Tata*) that the late J.R.D. Tata did not want his biography published in his lifetime. JRD was ostensibly being modest, but presumably he also felt an honest account would stir controversy. Biographies of eminent people should be expected to for they would have lived a complex life and taken many a difficult decision becoming heroes to many but found wanting by some. No one lives a life which when revealed to all will not embarass someone or the other, apart from the person concerned. The best biographies have always been the most controversial ones.

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There is no doubt that India has been home this century to some of the most dynamic, enterprising, and forward-looking businessmen in the world. This may sound odd in the current "Bombay Club" siege atmosphere in which even the tallest business leader is worried about foreign takeovers and competition. But the era of the "Bombay Plan" was a distant cry from the present phase of the "Bombay Plea". Indian businessmen walked tall, battled adversity and played on distinctly non-level playing fields.

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Mr. Karanjia's story of the Godrej family begins on a personal note. He informs us that his acquaintance with Godrej dates back to his father's friendship with Pirojsha Godrej. He and Sohrab Godrej became friends when they 'jointly' brought out a twelve-page supplement in *The Times of India* (September 1955), "recording for the first time the early struggles of Godrej against the entrenched British interests and Godrej achievements in diverse

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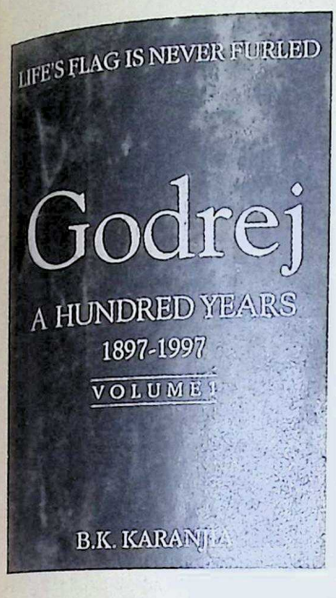

fields. "Mr Karanjia is honest in informing us that this effort won him a job with the Godrej's as a Publicity Manager, a job he retained for six years till he joined the Times group as editor of *Filmfare*. Four decades later, it is not 'editor-journalist' Karanjia who has written this book, but the old 'publicity manager' who has done so.

Karanjia offers adequate flavour of the pre-Independence days and of the entrepreneurial skills of the Godrejs as well as their links with the leadership of the national movement. The swadeshi angle is an important element of Karanjia's first volume since it deals with the first and second generation of the Godrejs. Ardeshir Godrej's friendship with Gandhi, Tagore and Tilak is mentioned in passing but nothing of substance or political news-value is mentioned about these friendships.

Leafing through the private papers of Seth Walchand Hirachand, now accessible in the archives of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, I came across a letter written by Karamchand Thapar to Babu Rajendra Prasad (later India's first President), in September 1940, which stated: "In May 1940 under instructions from B.M. Birla I had sent you a cheque for Rs. 5,000 to enable you to help the sugar industry in whatever manner you might think best. I have advised the Indian Sugar Syndicate office to send you another cheque for Rs 5000 which I hope you will be receiving very soon." Indian businessmen of that period, like subsequent generations, extended financial support to politicians in the name of swadeshi and national interest. At one level the friendship between business leaders and political leaders was an elevated relationship which strengthened the national movement. At another, it was a mutually beneficial relationship which neither really liked. The flavour of this contradiction doesn't come out in Karanjia's book though in Lala's book we get more than a glimpse of JRD's dislike for politicians.

Karanjia is entirely correct in emphasizing at the outset the power of the Godrej brandname. For generations of Indians the Godrej steel almirahs, the locks, the soaps and the typewriters are household names. So is the Tata name. The market for a book on these business groups, like any of the other big names should be substantial but these sugary accounts devoid of all spice are unlikely to enthuse too many readers.

It is easy to see from these two volumes that JRD is a very much more colourful and entertaining personality, compared to the Godrejs, and his life can be the subject of a racy novel. But Mr. Lala's politeness prevents him from giving us more than a mere glimpse of the private life and inner thoughts of 'Jeh'.

Consider just one telling example. In the Preface itself Mr Lala tells us that JRD was "no saint". "He had a glad eye for the ladies." Later he quotes JRD saying (p. 94), in response to complaints about his smoking, "All right, I don't gamble, I don't drink, I smoke, but *I don't womanize more than others*. So the easiest thing is to give up smoking." (Emphasis ours) Lala also tells us JRD's favourite joke about Lord and Lady Linlithgow (p. 39). On a visit to a stud farm, Lady Linlithgow was impressed by a bull which had 'performed all 365 days of the year'. "Go tell His Excellency" says Lady Linlithgow. When informed of the bull's prowess, Lord Linlithgow asks "What! With the same cow?" "No, sir" he is reassured. "Go and tell that to Her Excellency". Together, these anecdotes add up to offering us a rather colourful portrait of the handsome 'Jeh'. A ladies' man, who only complained (p. 94) that he has an "exaggerated reputation of a Casanova", ought to have got a better deal from his biographer than the bland statement, "But he did say to me that although his reputation as a playboy was an exaggeration, he had not lived as the Bible wanted him to live." Biographies and accounts of private conversations need more masala.

The mellowing of JRD comes through very clearly from the various anecdotes he recalls. In Darjeeling for his honeymoon in 1930, JRD was annoyed about being made to wait on the road for an hour to enable the Bengal Governor's motorcade to pass. When the motorcade arrived JRD jumped onto the road and shouted: "Who the hell do you think you are, keeping five hundred people, women and children, in the cold for an hour? You damn fool!"

In July 1993, months before he died, he went to Hyderabad at the invitation of his 'oldest living' friend, Kira, to inaugurate her Montessori Research and Training Centre. He was made to wait for 45 minutes at the venue because the state's minister for education, P.V. Ranga Rao (the wayward son of the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao) arrived late. Lala, who accompanied JRD, felt JRD may be annoyed by this affront but was struck by the graciousness with which he received Ranga Rao.

Moving from the private to the corporate, we get a good account of JRD's impatience with the politics of Nehru and Gandhi, his dislike for Morarji and his admiration for Sardar Patel and Jayaprakash Narayan. But not a word about what JRD thought of fellow businessmen or other members of the Tata family. We know that he appreciated Ratan Tata's "integrity, memory and energy" ("Ratan has everything I want for the firm"), but we know little of what he felt about the rivals and how they fared against Ratan on these scales. We get nuggets of interesting information but nothing more. We are told that Ratan was "somewhat annoyed" when JRD said he wanted to consult Ajit Kerkar about naming Ratan his successor and was relieved to discover that what JRD wanted to find out from Kerkar was the "auscpicious date"! A Parsi corporate tycoon consulting a Hindu about an 'auspicious date' for anointing his successor! Kerkar advised Monday, 25 March (1991). Which calendar did he consult?

JRD was a great Indian and richly deserved the Bharat Ratna that the Narasimha Rao government finally conferred on him in 1992. JRD himself valued the Dadabhai Naoroji Award more than the Bharat Ratna (p. 128) because of Naoroji's commitment to women's education, a cause dear to him. JRD was a modernist, an institution builder and a true Indian. Agonizing over the destruction of the Babri Masjid, JRD reportedly asked Lala: "I cannot understand how erecting a temple is more important than building a great literature or making India into a prosperous and peaceful country."

One or two biographies cannot capture the full flavour of the life of men like JRD. Hopefully more will be written and of more such corporate leaders, and they will tell us all—the pains and pleasures, the virtues and vices and the fulfillments and failures of big businessmen who are, after all, mere mortals.

Sanjaya Baru, is an economic journalist who currently hosts Crossfire *on Doordarshan Metro.*

MANOHAR

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The study provides a summary of the political history of the area and analyses in detail central, eastern and southern Nolambavadi monuments. Appendices and a glossary add to the utility of the work. It is profusely illustrated with over 75 b/w photographs. A pioneering work in an area unexplored so far.

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An Unbonded Explorer of Frontiers

Tulsi Patel

SEEMANTON KE ANVEKSHAK SHYAMACHARAN DUBE

Compiled and edited by Leela Dube and Sudheesh Pachauri

Vani Prakashan, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 255, Rs. 250.00

In this montage comprising thirty-one contributions and a candid but intensely personal introduction by Leela Dube, S.C. Dube (SC now on) emerges as a pioneering anthropologist/sociologist, a lover of literature, a critic with an insatiable appetite for inquiry and knowledge, an effective communicator and an imaginative and fearless academic and administrator of outstanding courage of conviction. This tribute released on his first death anniversary is a collection of memoirs, assessment and evaluation of the multi-dimensional personality and work of SC spanning over five decades. The book is divided into three parts: memoirs, lectures and articles by SC and a few of his interviews published in Hindi newspapers and journals. It is through the lenses of the contributors, based on parts of their lives spent with SC (and his writings) that an alive, socially responsible and rich life presents itself to the readers. Amidst these varying personal memories are reflections about SC's roles as a scholar, teacher, intellectual, writer, administrator, friend, guide, neighbour and relative except for a couple of personal biographical pieces (one of them by Sumati Mutatkar, the noted musician) the contributors are senior social scientists, litterateurs, critics, journalists, philosophers, bureaucrats with social commitment and a few upcoming scholars. The book begins with a brief biographical sketch of SC, whose life began in 1922 in Madhya Pradesh. Early loss of his mother and his subsequent dialogue and friendship with books carved him as an adolescent writer in Hindi magazines, an interest which continued throughout his life. It was perhaps his preoccupation with folklore and tribal social life in the *adivasi* surroundings of Chattisgarh that made him turn to anthropology after a brilliant career in political science. *The Kamar*, the monograph on shifting cultivators and food gatherers brought him international acclaim. Followed by *Indian Village*, his work paved the way for a two decade long period of village studies in Indian sociology.

SC's pathbreaking work, *Indian Village* was followed by his foray into the study of planned change. The anguish of community development in its various dimensions remained throughout his life. Over a dozen books from him were rooted in contemporary Indian social issues. From the tribal soil and sensibility of Chattisgarh, SC moved on to understanding and writing on *India's Changing Villages*, to *Modernization and Development: The Search for Alternative Paradigms*, penetrating thoughts on *Tradition and Development*, and *Indian Society*. SC's concern for tribal society, especially of Madhya Pradesh (MP), his home state, his teaching, research and administrative experiences brought him closer to the grassroots as well as bureaucracy and the higher echelons of society and their functioning. His love for Hindi literature—which engaged him since early childhood continued all along. Namvar Singh's recall of SC's confession of the emotional attachment with literature is revealing and picturesque: 'Literature entered my life stealthily and stayed put there. This all-weather friend never separated from me'. He openly admitted the superior strength of a few insights in literature over a large scale survey report. His deep interest in literature coloured his intense grip over sociological issues. Many including the litterateurs in this volume have admired him for his courage in turning full time to writing in Hindi after retirement. In B.R. Chauhan's words, SC's shift from S.C. Dube to Shyamacharan Dube towards the latter part of his life was the result of a conscious decision and conviction. He was concerned about communicating with a much wider audience in India which is not Anglophone, a disability of sorts in the present times. He advised his colleagues in social sciences both young and not so young to write in their own languages so that standard literature in the discipline is made available in these languages, and to a larger community of sociologists. His *Indian Society* publi-shed by the National Book Trust and translated in various Indian languages was written with this specific purpose in mind.

From memories of some of his colleagues at the University of Sagar, Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla and in Delhi, his entrenchment in some of the traditional Indian values he cherished, woven with western ways and values comes across in an appreciative tone. With his effortless and sculpted use of exclusive Hindi and English, both in oration and writing, he did not restrict himself to sociology. He interacted actively with colleagues in other departments in universities, recall his students and colleagues. The title of the volume is perhaps based not only on his going across disciplinary boundaries, but also for neither being overwhelmed by traditional nor overawed by western thought (Girish Mishra: 132). He was not nostalgic about tradition. His committed intellectual personality is viewed as having a multi-dimensional contemporaneity. He stood on his cultural ground and rose up to an alert, interesting and analytical view of a broad international picture. His was the intellectual refusal of an imposed reality and a critical and objective look for indigenous thought, method and practice. His views on development alternatives insisted on a decolonized and yet not an untangled approach to understanding and policy intervention, particularly in the spheres of modernization, change and quality of life.

For him good theory depended on the possibility of its use and utility. In this light he preferred an uninterrupted contextualized research that was rooted and yet not parochial or traditional essentialist. Perhaps it is a composite view of all this that Mrinal Pande's very informed and incisive commentary portrays the pitiable plight of today's intellectual, removed from the common man, who writes and publishes in English, more prestigiously abroad. She is eloquent in expressing her surprise that some sociologists instead of bothering about altering this worrisome situation are advocating a distance from real life, its experiences and aspirations. They advocate saving sociology from moral solutions, in their efforts at making sociology rise above time and space. Mrinal Pande believes SC to be a spokesperson of complex social problems and their easy administrative solutions. We at Jamia had this experience: Once faced with the great unease of teachers in the Department of Sociology at Jamia in teaching some classes through Hindi and Urdu medium, he related his rewarding experiments of teaching, learning and writing in Hindi. The manner in which he related his experiences and disclosed his late resolve to reach more people by writing in Hindi inspired us to make sincere efforts in following suit. Shobhita Jain's piece reiterates these qualities.

The inadequate permeability of development of tribals brought him close to B.D. Sharma whose piece is the best illustration to negate the well-known and deeply entrenched chasm between academics and bureaucrats. P.C. Joshi's piece reveals his relationship with many of his contemporary sociologists. Without broadcasting his theoretical knowledge, SC could give incisive directions to set people towards serious questioning. Suresh Shukla's is a very balanced and close frame view of SC in the sociological world of Delhi, a sort of centre removed from the periphery. Shukla laments the insufficient use of SC's valuable and exclusive talent by the system in India, notwithstanding his administrative spells.

Both in his conduct and ideas, SC was free from regional, communal and caste prejudices. Nandu Ram's piece is eloquent on this. He had sympathy for the under-privileged and came forward with help at crucial times. Accessible to the younger generation, he was dear to several of the younger sociologists who have contributed to the volume. To Atal, Anand Kumar, Nandu Ram and Soumendra Patnaik, he was a father figure. He is known to seek out bright minds. What touched many was his interest in people's academic work.

Despite a near absence of neighbourhood culture in the metropolis, he had close and warm relations with neighbours (Pachauri). His sense of humour, love for and capacity to communicate with children was endearing. He greatly admired his literary friends. A great deal of exchange of reading material took place and resulted in interesting conversations around it. His understanding and evaluation of literature was so sharp that he was on the board of literary awards such as Jnan Peeth and Vyas Samman.

Sachidanand's lament is apt: The world listened with a lot of attention. alas, you left in the midst.

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Home of Man's Being

Some Observations on Language, Culture and Identity*

Nirmal Verma

To say anything about language is like trying to catch one's own shadow. Or to be more precise, we *are* its shadow, in which we embody the shifting identities of our self. It is an unending exploration, for man *qua* man can never define himself completely, once and for all. Not merely because there is something unknown or unknowable about 'man' but also because he is constantly making, remaking, unmaking himself, and for that reason cannot be treated as a 'finished product'. What shall be the stages and stations of his journey into the future (if he has any future at all) remains as mysterious and unchartered as ever despite the philosophical speculations made about it from Nietzsche to Sri Aurobindo and the predictions of the modern-day futurists.

This is not the place to discuss the veracity or otherwise of these speculations but one thing seems to be clear that these speculations—such as they are—arise out of deep dissatisfaction with the 'partial images' of man as they have been provided to us by history. We as human beings are perpetually tormented by a sense of incompleteness within us, which is further aggravated by a feeling that this incompleteness is more apparent than real, that in *reality* we were totally self-contained, a reality, which is deeply buried in us waiting to be excavated. Like a sentence half written on a page, we try to decipher the erased part to 'complete' its meaning.

Language is perhaps the most effective tool for such a task of 'self-excavation'. In it is reflected man's image not in its fragmented parts, but in its *totality*, not what he *is* but what he *could be*; it uncovers the potentiality inherent in his being. This act of 'self-uncovering' gives him a unique status, distinguishing him from the rest of the living beings. The uniqueness of a culture lies not in its historical reality which is bound to be distorted by external pressures, but in what it dreams out to be, in its *ideality*.

If language plays such a crucial role in the self-identification (Atma-bodh) of a culture, it is because it makes man aware of the dark roots of memory or a chain of memories, which constitute his *tradition*, his special way of looking at the world—and also at himself—his self in the world. If by some catastrophic act of collective amnesia we forget everything about our past, but our language survives then not much is lost, because through language, the past would still be flowing within our present, resonant with all the racial memories, *samskaras* and mythical associations. Language is the most hopeful guarantee against *forgetting*. No wonder, the totalitarian regimes of our times were so eager to suppress the voices of its writers and poets, for their writings were the surest safeguard to preserve the memory, which they, the tyrants, were so eager to destroy. In this sense, language is a double-edged weapon; it is not only an instrument of communication, but also the bearer of truth, which is an integral part of its cultural heritage.

A culture seeks and discovers its truth, its 'essence' in the particular *order* of meanings inherent in the structure of its language. It is through this order we interpret the 'reality' of the world. The extent to which the members of a cultural group get disinherited from their linguistic moorings, either by some external intervention or inner displacement (in colonized India, both were inter-related) their perceptions of reality get dim and distorted. Man depends upon the perceptions of things as language presents them to him. It is this which among other things distinguish the human languages from the mere 'sounds of communication' found in the animal world. The 'animal language' is chiefly governed by the immediate impulses of fear, hunger, sex and once they are satiated, they die away leaving no trace behind. Human speech, on the other hand, constitutes an order of sounds, which in the course of time, transcends the physical immediacy of the moment, acquiring a stability and solidity of words, which arranged in a certain order, unfold a whole world of meanings related to the human condition. As primitive man builds an image of god at a site where some miraculous event occured and the image continues to be worshipped by the succeeding generations, even after the memory of the miracle is lost, so also words are the bearers of archetypal memory. The 'momentary gods', whose meanings outlast their immediate context. Myths are to the language what gods were to the primitive man, both transform the ephemeral event into an everlasting symbol.

Here we come in contact with the twin aspects of language—one which we speak with one another, its functional aspects, the other which lies beneath its surface, its *essential* spirit, which is constantly echoed in the subtlest forms in the spoken words of everyday speech. What we speak, in different ways, reflects the essential, the invisible 'messages' of the underground world. In the insightful words of Heidegger, "Speaking is a kind of inner listening; it is listening to the language we speak. We speak by listening to what language tells us. And we are able to hear what language says only in so far as we are in our very essence taken up into the essence of language belonging to it." Perhaps this is most manifestly true in a poem, for we hear *that* in the words of a poem which the language unfolds in its essence. "Language in its essence is the still stream that writes, while itself generating them, its two banks, what it *says* and our speech echoing that."

It is precisely this inner 'essence' of a language which determines the directive gaze of a people, a distinctive mode of apprehending reality. Each language happens to be the 'home of man's being', from which different communities, cultural groups, religious sects seek and derive their basic source of nourishment. Thus there is no such thing as one language, but many languages, each different from one another not only in their sound patterns and grammatical structures, but in their *world-view*, in their basic perceptions of reality, in their conception of man, nature and gods. As the eminent philologist, philosopher W. Von Humboldt says, "Each language draws a magic circle round the people to which it belongs, a circle from which there is no escape save by stepping out of it into another."

As it is difficult to visualize the European civilization without the Greek and Latin languages and the classical mythology related to them—both are so intimately interwoven with each other—so also Indian civilizational identity is indelibly stamped by the ancient *puranas* and epics created in Sanskrit which left such a profound ever-lasting imprint on the Indian psyche. Apart from its familiar historically documented past, so manifestly ascertainable, a people also has its 'inner past' which like an invisible stream flows beneath its consciousness. Language, as it is reflected in the myths and epics, provide the clue to unlock its secret universe. The words denoted for sun, fire, water and sky in *Rgveda* evoke a kind of response from a Hindu mind, which is very different from the associative memories which these words have in Greek and Latin languages. Human languages are born in the same world, but each language has a world uniquely its own. When we translate from one language to another, then we not only translate the words, but through words, the entire cultural baggage of the language has to be 'transported' to another language. "Thus when we set out to learn a new language, we have the impression of approaching a new world... it is like a voyage of discovery in an alien land and the greatest gain from such a voyage lies in having learnt to look upon our mother tongue in a new light". As Goethe so perceptively said "So long as we know no foreign language, we are in a sense ignorant of our own, for we fail to see its specific structure and distinctive features".

A comparison of different languages shows us that there are no exact synonyms; corresponding terms from two languages seldom refers to the same objects or actions. As the eminent Sanskrit scholar of Harvard University, Dr. Witzal points out "Many words in Sanskrit as well as in other languages cannot be rendered by a single good translation of the term e.g. the concept encompassed by the term '*Rt*' is in fact quite similar to the equally untranslatable term 'dharm'. Modern usage of the word 'truth' does not envisage all aspects of the term *Rt*... English or German have no word expressing the combination of concepts carried by the term '*Rt*.' which *is an active realization of truth, a vital force which can underline human or divine action* (Emphasis added).

What Dr. Witzel says about the Rgvedic term '*Rt*' equally applies to concepts like *Atm, Brahma, Sat*, etc.—the list is endless—which don't have any satisfactory equivalents in other languages. In order to make these seminal concepts of Indian philosophical and

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religious tracts accessible in languages other than Sanskrit, it is necessary to illuminate the entire traditional context, from which they acquire specific meanings, their *world-view*. Failure to do this may lead not merely to the serious misreadings of the ancient texts, but total misrepresentation of the essential *philosophical vision* and cultural ethos embedded in the seminal terms of these texts, as was regrettably done by many European orientalists and philologists. The well-known art historian Anand Coomaraswami has drawn our attention to the deplorable consequences of such mistranslations. In the introduction to his book on *Hinduism and Buddhism*, he writes:

> "Brahmanism or Hinduism is not only the oldest mystery religion or rather metaphysical discipline. . . but also perhaps one of those that has survived with an unbroken tradition that is lived and understood at the present day by millions of men. Nevertheless. . . it would be hardly an exaggeration to say that a faithful account of Hinduism might well be given in the form of categorical denial of most of the statements that have been made about it, alike by European scholars and by Indians trained in our modern sceptical and evolutionary modes of thought."

Arguing against all the popular, platitudinous notions of the western scholars, Anand Coomaraswami further points out that Vedic doctrine is neither "pantheistic nor polytheistic" that *Karma* is not fate except in the sense of character and destiny that inhere in created things themselves which determine their vocation. He further illustrates his point by referring to the populist misconceptions about the term 'Maya' which is not 'illusion' but rather the world of appearances by which we may either by enlightened or deluded according to the degree of our maturity". Such examples of misreading and mistranslations can be multiplied, which only goes to show what types of distorted images of Indian culture and tradition were made available to the West during the last two hundred years. All Indo-European languages belong to one family, but each language, over the centuries, has acquired its own specific cultural intonation. As Humboldt points out, "Even in languages closely akin and agreeing in the general structure, we do not find identical names. The Greek and Latin terms for the moon, although they refer to the same object, do not express the same intention or concept".

In recent years the term 'secularism' has become a subject of passionate controversy in India, precisely because, torn from its European context, its application to Indian polity seriously upsets the age-old relation between '*dharma*' and '*Rajya*' (State). The literal translation of the term as '*dharmnirpekshta*' has little relevance in a society where '*dharma*'—as distinguished from the Semitic term religion—is inextricably interwoven with the entire fabric of life embracing both its secular and non-secular spheres. In sharp contrast to the post-renaissance Europe, there was no clear-cut demarcation between the 'religious' and 'secular' in the Indian tradition, dharma being the sole arbiter of man's actions on the earth. This is one among many instances, how the imposition of an alien concept can lead to artificial divisions in a society where in actual reality no such divisions exist. One can well imagine how in a colonial context, such gross misunderstanding of linguistic concepts, leads to something more than mere intellectual confusion, it creates an unbridgeable gulf, between what people traditionally believe in and what they are forcibly required to practise. It creates a schism within the consciousness alienating the people from their understanding of 'self'—a malaise from which India is suffering even after fifty years of Independence.

It is interesting to note that what Coomaraswami had said earlier about the colonial distortions of the East, was later more than corroborated by the German philosopher, Heidegger, who calls it an ongoing process of the "Europeanization of the Earth". It is this, according to Heidegger, which causes numerous misunderstandings of the Eastern cultures. The Indian philosopher, J.L. Mehta, who was also a close associate of Heidegger quotes him. Dr. Mehta writes:

> "After returning from Europe, a Japanese philosopher gave a series of lectures on the aesthetics of art and poetry, in which he had tried to explain Japanese art with the help of European theories of aesthetics. Heidegger is reported to have objected to this. "Is it right to depend on European principles of aesthetics to explain Japanese art?" He said, "Both the name and concept (of aesthetics) originated from the Greek concept of 'philosophia'; consequently its basic conceptual structure would remain alien and unfamiliar to East Asian modes of perception. Why do you have to take guidance from Europe for this?" The Japanese scholar said in answer, "It is because from European philosophy, we get those concepts in the light of which we could understand the essential features of our poetry". "Do you need 'concepts' for this?" Yes the Japanese scholar replied. "After coming in contact with the western modes of thought, we find a certain deficiency in our language, a lack of capacity to delimit material phenomena, so that by putting them in a 'former' and 'latter' order it could visualise them in a monoscemic synthesis". In reply, Heidegger said, "Do you really regard this 'deficiency' as a shortcoming of your language? Is it at all necessary for you to run after western concepts? If you do that then will it not result in your failure to make a distinction between your view of reality and that of the western world, each having a distinctive form of its own and thus closing the doors of any authentic dialogue between them?"

At the end the Japanese scholar had to admit that the infatuation with western concepts would necessarily lead to the devaluation of the richness of the linguistic concepts which the Japanese have inherited from their own tradition.

One could add to this another interesting incident about a German, who was translating Lao-tze, who once asked his Chinese friend "I don't understand, why Chinese speak in this way?" to which the Chinese scholar answered "because the Chinese hadn't read Aristotles' Logic at that time". At which Heidegger exclaimed "Thank God they hadn't read it!"

It seems to be a matter of common experience that when we express our thoughts in a language other than our own, then the thoughts themselves start getting governed by the conceptual apparatus of that language. Language, in that case, does not remain merely a passive medium, but tends to acquire an autonomous power, an effective instrument of force. We of course express our thoughts in that language, but *only in the manner, in which it would permit them to be expressed.* In the words of Dr. Mehta, "it is the question of the domineering power of that language that what we want to say, we cannot express or express in the manner, in which that language would like us to say".

This is an important statement to which Indian writers, scholars and translators should give serious thought for it is they, the ruling westernized intelligentsia over whom the English language had such a "domineering" influence and who have been, as the Japanese scholars, blindly infatuated by European concepts. Do we not find ourselves in an unenviable situation when we express ourselves in a foreign language, whose conceptual structure pulls us in one direction, while our own cultural experience pulls us in the opposite direction? In such a situation of 'linguistic displacement', the national identity of a people itself comes under a shadow—a shadow, which is not merely confined to the elitist classes but since Independence, has enveloped a large mass of people.

It, however, seems to be too simplistic a thesis to put the entire blame on western scholars, as Edward Said does in his book *Orientalism*. It is of course true that they arrived at very wrong conclusions by their occidental bias, but was it also not the fault of the eastern thinkers and scholars, who in their intellectual sensibility accepted their 'evidence' as conclusive, without questioning the validity of their conceptual categories? Profound thinkers like Sri Aurobindo and Ananda Coomaraswami, who advanced such a critique, radical and illuminating as it was, were almost totally ignored and marginalized by the 'mainstream secularist' institutions of their own academic world. Even Edward Said preferred not to mention them (if he knew of them at all) even though his famous book was written almost half a century after their work was already available in print.

But let me return for a moment to the reference of Aristotle's 'Logic' in context with the native of oriental languages. It is a matter of common knowledge that

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the formal structure of these languages where reason or rationality play an important part is very different from those languages which are more deeply oriented to the metaphorical view of the world. Here philosophy and poetry are not divided in separate compartments, but more or less tread the same ground borrowing their 'images' from a symbolic reality which in its multi-layered richness, is far more *inclusive* than the one guided by logical categories. In Indian tradition particularly, the terms like *'atm'*, *'Chitt'*, *'manas'*, *'sat'* *'drishti'* *'darshan'*—just to mention a few—have a rich 'ambiguity' about them (As Empson uses the term) for they carry within them an invisible (not abstract) universality of concepts as well as the poetic potentiality of the metaphor—a heady mixture—which was so effectively exploited no less by the Rgvedic seers than by their worthy successors, the anonymous authors of the epics and later by the medieval saint-poets.

There could be several factors responsible for the difference between the logical and metaphorical structure of languages, into which I will not go here. I would only like to draw attention to two important facts; firstly, the approach to 'time' which a tradition has, its time consciousness, seems to play a very significant role in determining the 'inner form and rhythm' of a language. The myth-oriented languages, carrying a metaphorical view of reality are usually rooted in a tradition which believes in the cyclic motion of time, with the eternal recurrence of events in its circular movement. It is not the same 'time' which moves in unilinear direction, determining the historical progression of events—the western notion of time—which came to be accepted in Europe after Augustine. Time which sanctifies 'history' is not the same time which is sanctified by myth. The distinguished Hindi poet and essayist 'Agyeya', made some fine observations in regard to the relation of specific notions of time with the modulations of language in a literary work. He writes:

"By accepting the (western) notion of historical time we have brought in a certain rigidity in the construction of our sentences. So long as we retained our awareness to the circular movement of time, we preserved a kind of flexibility in our language which we were forced to abandon. We began to accept certain sentence-structures as unalterable, which would resist any kind of deviation or disruption. If the linguistic structure of 'New Poetry' (Nayi Kavita) seems to be less elastic and more stultified, is it not because its awareness of time is very strongly tied up with its unilinear movement?"

Man's awareness of time and—his specific mode of apprehending its movement, is intimately linked with his relation to nature. It is often seen that in those traditions where nature is not regarded as a hostile force, eternally the 'other', an object of conquest and subjugation but something which is a part of 'extended self' a reflection of what is innate in man—his 'human nature' as it were, then the role of the language also undergoes a radical change. More than a mere means of communication, it acquires a magical aura in-charged with its own inner light. By becoming 'symbolic' in its essence, it demolishes the duality, which history has imposed upon it, it becomes identifiable with the totality of man. In such traditions as Northrop Fry so illuminatingly says, "Man and nature share equally in a common energy constituting an indivisible unit. But in societies where man and nature are divided into hostile categories, *there the metaphorical unity of the language begins to disintegrate*. Instead of the metaphor, now reason begins to dominate the language. In place of images, man now begins to create a language of intellectual concepts. *Categories of thought and imagination separating one from another, lose their metaphorical quality*, as it has happened with the languages of the western world, where under the aggressive domination of science and reason, man's relation to nature has been completely ruptured" (Emphasis added).

If in the Indian tradition, languages were able to preserve their "metaphorical unity", it is because man's relation to nature was always regarded as sacrosanct. As a traveller is able to find his way in the dark night by tracing the movement of the stars, so also Indians were able to identify their 'place' in the world in the light of their age-old myths and symbols. As Auden so aptly said, "Symbols are like a stick in the hands of a blind man, by which he gropes his way on this earth". In Indian languages one witnesses the rare synthesis of stillness and movement, where myths and metaphors remain the same through the ages but their meaning changes as time passes.

However, 'meanings' do not develop in a vacuum; they need a geographical space to constantly interpenetrate with the lives of the people who share the same 'home'. We cannot separate the symbolic character of a language from its 'natural' habitat. If in Indian language the symbols of trees, mountains, rivers are so potently metaphorical—it is because they are something much more than 'natural objects'—names like Ganga, Saraswati, Himalaya—carry within themselves the mythical allusions, the sacred memories of their ancestors. They bear the imprint of divine power. Ecological forces of nature are informed with iconic significance. The name *Bharat* is more than a country, it is literally what the word signifies, a "place infused with light", it was revered as *'deva-bhoomi* (land of the gods) and its language Sanskrit as *'deva-bhasha'*, the language divine. Names became the manifestation of the *'numan'*.

It is precisely these mythical memories embedded in Sanskrit and Indian languages which contributed so profoundly in enabling the Indians to retrive their self-hood—their awareness of belonging to a 'nation' with a common cultural heritage in the late 19th and 20th centuries. No one was more aware than the European Indologists and philosophers including Hegel and Max Mueller of this 'danger'. While on the one hand they discarded the Indian 'present' as nothing but the remnant of its glorious past, on the other hand they were also aware that so long as Sanskrit continues to be the medium of intellectual discourse, the civilizational identity of India could not be easily erased by Europe. Indian civilization, despite all the colonial depredations and cultural onslaughts of the West was still able to preserve its distinctive cultural identity; it could not be treated as a precious ruin of the past, like its Egyptian and Greek counterparts, beautiful and glorious but only as archaeological "treasures" fit to be locked within the museum walls. The national awakening of the Indian people, popularly known as the 'Cultural Renaissance' in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was an act of 'rejuvenation of its tradition through its languages. Not only did they make Indians recover the memory of their past, but opened channels to let the past flow in their present. The imperial official Macaulay was not wrong when he said, "we shall never be able to establish the domination of European culture in India unless we succeed in completely banishing the Sanskrit language from the Indian educational system". When in 1928, the Indian philosopher, K.C. Bhattacharya pointed out the significance of 'swaraj in ideas' as part of a self-liberating process, it was closely linked with the freedom to think and conceptualize in its language.

The idea of the 'nation state' is therefore not an 'artificial construct' as some of our more fashionable 'secularist' historians would like us to believe. (In their subaltern enthusiasm they are no different than their imperial predecessors who saw India as no more than a motley conglomeration of disparate religions, linguistic groups of communities). The underlying idea of the 'nation state' as it was made clear in the early writings of Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo was to recover the civilization unity of India which had been so badly ruptured and distorted by two hundred years of European domination. India becoming a nation was a natural flowering of an idea into a reality which involved neither violence nor destruction. In this it was very different from the aggressive intolerance of the European and American nation-states which came into existence only after uprooting millions of people from their native settlements. Today even the memory of their existence has disappeared. The Indian nationalism, in its origins had the spiritual foundations of a culture, where the various creeds and faiths could co-exist without ever becoming an obstacle to the idea of national unity.

Nirmal Verma is a Hindi writer who has published several collections of short stories and novels. His latest publication is a collection of essays, Doosre Shabdon Mein *(Bharatiya Jnana Peeth, 1997).*

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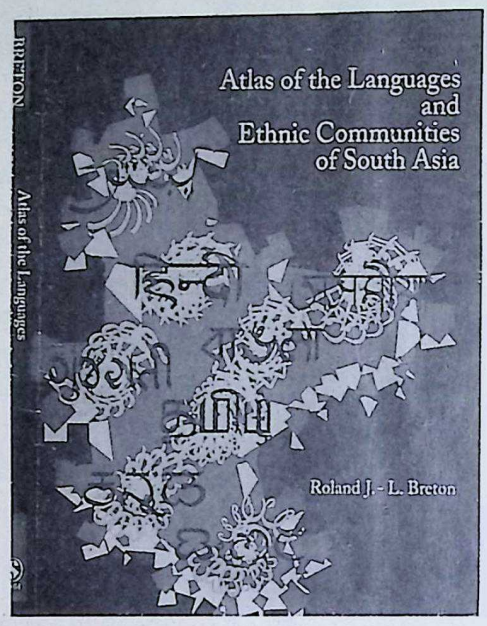
By Roland J.L. Breton

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 230 (including 60 plates, 5 tables, 1 language classification chart, select bibliography and subject and author index), Rs. 795.00 (cloth)



South Asia, a well defined geographical area with presently 1/5th of the human kind, and a cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations in the world with a common history was mapped excellently by Joseph Swartzberg (1978) in his *Historical Atlas of South Asia*. The present atlas under review—*Atlas of the Languages and Ethnic Communities of South Asia* (revised and enlarged edition of the one published first in French in 1976 with bilingual French-English maps) by Roland J.L. Breton provides a geolinguistic view—synchronic and dichronic—of the linguistically diversified South Asia based on the Census data, available for over a hundred years since 1881.

The atlas has two parts. "The first part introduces, on a discursive mode, the general relationship between language and ethno-cultural structure of the subcontinent. The second part aims at analyzing the regional distribution of language and ethnic communities through graphic exploration". The author claims that the plates (part - ii) do not merely illustrate the discourse (part - i) but are used as information processing figurative tools. But one also sees that the maps, especially the thematic maps of the type here are constructs of one's understanding or perception or imaginations of situation or phenomena i.e. maps are also the result of and just not result in understanding a phenomenon. Breton's understanding of 'Hindustani linguistic complex' as consisting of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi (p. 18) is reflected in plates on the Hindi belt which includes Punjabi. It is generally understood by laymen as well as scholars that 'Hindustani' refers to the broad spectrum of a linguistic continuum with 'high' Hindi (Sanskritized) and 'high' Urdu (Persianized) at its two ends and the use of which as a lingua-franca was advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. 'Hindustani' included Hindi, and Urdu but not Punjabi.

In the first discursive part related to the general relationship between language and ethnocultural structure of the subcontinent, Breton observes that there is no strict one to one correspondence between language and other markers of ethnic identity such as race, tribe, caste and religion in the subcontinent and many a geopolitical problem arose as a result of the colonial and postcolonial search for regional conscience. He opines that a country like India has survived as a result of its ability to reorganize itself, further strengthening its democratic set up.

What undermines these observations is however the discursive nature of the text, at places very naive in interpretation especially of census data on mothertongue and bilingualism with reference to language maintenance and loss, non-technical use of phrases like 'linguistic area', 'language use', etc. which have come to have specific meaning in linguistic/sociolinguistic discourse, use of new and vague phrases like "parallel communities" at times odd sounding like "registered believers" and misunderstandings such as "cultural languages" as opposed to tribal languages and Persian as the literary language of Iqbal and Tagore, etc.

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A unique feature of the atlas is the depiction of languages both in terms of their geographical extent as well in terms of their number of speakers, either on a single map or several maps and graphs with common hatching patterns, mostly on a single plate, enabling easy comparison of the two.

"The second part of the atlas is made up of 60 plates including maps and graphs along with description and commentaries. The numerical data is also accommodated in the text and in case where it cannot be, it appears at the end of the plate series." "The first three plates cover the subcontinent: the following 33 plates display regional situations; 14 others deal with non-regional phenomena extending all over the subcontinent." These plates are largely based on 1961 census data but also make use of data from other censuses starting from 1881. The last 10 plates are based on the 1991 census.

The small scale of the maps, including those of the regional ones, coupled with district as the unit of data aggregation and depiction in case of regional maps, ensures greater generalization. The regional maps show languages within its physical environment to drive home the correlation between the two as for example the extent of Marathas and the Deccan Trap in plate 25 or the distribution of tribal languages in the hilly jungle tracks (plate 26). A unique feature of the atlas is the depiction of languages both in terms of their geographical extent as well in terms of their number of speakers, either on a single map or several maps and graphs with common hatching patterns mostly on a single plate enabling easy comparison of the two. The graphs employed are anamorphed maps, ethnograms designed to show—synchronically or dichronically—the size of a speech community both in absolute numbers as well as percentage of given population in a region and simple cartesian graphs. The atlas also has some other interesting and innovative techniques of cartographic presentation such as topological depiction of smaller languages outside of their geographical area or location (plate 58).

However, in some maps such as the one on Hindi mothertongue speakers on plate 11, two different and incomparable methods of representation—one as proportion of Hindi MT speakers in the districts outside of the Hindi states are employed, giving a split image of one phenomenon. In some cases two different scales are employed to depict one phenomenon on a map (plate 29) or in a histogram (plate 44). Therefore the maps and graphs need to be read carefully.

The plates, with the exception of a few, are based largely on mothertongue data ignoring the data on bilingualism and subsidiary languages. But multilingualism or plurilingualism is not the same as linguistic heterogeneity or linguistic diversity as implied in plate 50. No wonder Breton concludes his introduction to the atlas evocatively declaring, "May everyone who loves diversity enjoy this atlas." The atlas, though in black and white in this era of colour cartography, contains a wealth of information on language demography and excellent maps and charts based on it. It remains a pioneering contribution towards a geolinguistics of South Asia.

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In Conversation with Nirupama Borgohain

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Nirupama Borgohain is one of the best known women writers of Assam and one of the five women who have received the Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *Abhiyatri* in 1996. She has published twenty-four novels and ten short story collections. Her autobiography *Through Belief and Doubt* written in the Assamese is presently in its third edition and has been critically acclaimed. She was awarded the Saraswati Award for her novel *Anyajiban* in 1987 and the Assam Sahitya Sabha Award for the same novel in 1990. Her award winning novel *Abhiyatri* is being translated and published by the Sahitya Akademi. Preeti Gill met her in Guwahati in April and the following are the excerpts of that conversation.

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Preeti Gill: When did you first start writing and what attracted you to fiction?

Nirupama Borgohain: I contributed stories and articles to the high school magazine which I also edited. The stories and novels which I started to read from a young age expanded the horizon of imagination which inspired me to write my own fiction.

PG: What are the issues and themes you have explored in your own writing?

NB: The theme of my first published short story (which I wrote at the age of 13) was a kind of social rebellion. In the first story which was published by what you might call a standard magazine I focussed on the patriarchal, tyrannical subjugation of women in villages. Then I drifted to problems and concerns of middle-class life, something that invited the wrath of socially conscious critics! However, that was only a transitory phase and I did revert to the predicament of women and the downtrodden in my writing.

PG: What is the literary tradition that has influenced you and your work?

NB: Rabindra Nath Tagore has always been a profound influence and my earlier writing is dotted with quotations from his corpus. I think I belong to the liberal humanistic tradition, and have been influenced by writers such as Tolstoy, Victor Hugo, and Thomas Hardy. Dostoyevsky has also been an influence. But in my 'feminist' writings I have trodden the radical path too.

PG: Tell me about your awards—you are among the five Assamese women recipients of the Sahitya Akademi award. Please tell me about the novels that have won these accolades.

NB: The very first award I got was the Saraswati National Award from Bangalore. My novel *Anyajiban* was adjudged the best among works by women writers of the north-east states, Bengal and Orissa in 1987 by the jury for this award. Then I got the Basanti Devi award for the same novel in 1990, conferred by the Asom Sahitya Sabha. The Sabha presented me with the Hem Barua award in 1995 for my novel *Abhiyatri*. For the same novel I received the Sahitya Academy award in 1996.

The narrative in *Anyajiban* revolves round a young woman's quest for the truth behind the death of a village woman. It's revealed that the woman was dragged to her death over hard, stubbly ground by her husband. This novel is based on a true incident that occurred in my husband's village in upper Assam.

Abhiyatri is a biographical novel, based on the remarkable life of Chandraprabha Saikiani, who was born in a very backward village of Assam. Her untameable desire for education propelled her to the American Missionary School at Nowgong. Her firebrand nature was revealed there when she protested against the derogatory remarks of the American Sisters about the 'natives' and she made them withdraw those remarks. Then she taught in a school at Tezpur and also fell in love with Dandinath Kalita, a writer. However Dandinath Kalita did not marry her because Chandraprabha was a low-caste woman. As she became pregnant she had to leave Tezpur. She decided to bring her child up on her own. Later this child, a son, became a successful trade union leader and a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Assam. Afterwards she threw herself into the freedom struggle and also established the Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti, the pioneer women's organization of Assam. A true Gandhian, she roamed the whole state, establishing a destitute home, child and mother welfare institutions and working in the Harijan Colony. She is also a versatile writer, although a great deal of her writing remains unpublished.

PG: You said you are the only Leftist woman writer of your generation. What this has meant to your writing in terms of recognition you have achieved.

NB: I don't think I have received any formal recognition for this, rather I was deprived of many laurels by the establishment. However, many young intellectuals have given special attention to my writing because of its Leftist slant.

PG: Why is it that there are no English translations of your novels barring a few short stories published in some anthologies? Why is there a dearth of good translations of the literature emanating from Assam since you have such a rich and ancient tradition and a vast body of work available that the non-Assamese reader should be exposed to. Oriya literature is much better known, writers and poets have been translated into English, Hindi and other languages. Why does Assamese literature suffer from this lacuna?

NB: First of all, we must blame ourselves for not being enterprising in trying to focus our literature outside Assam. We also have the perception that people outside the north-east do not care to know about us. So what's the use of trying to project our concerns beyond our borders? There is also a dearth of good and willing translators. But the main cause is the lack of publishers in the language. Who would take interest in the output from this region? I had *Abhiyatri* translated but Penguin refused it. We also sounded *Kali for Women*, thinking that they might be the appropriate people for publishing this work about an extraordinary woman. But they did not even bother to respond to our queries in this regard, even after a reminder. You must admit that all this is rather disheartening.

PG: Since we cannot ignore the importance of the quality of translations if your literature (Assamese I mean) is to reach the outside reader, how can this lack be overcome? Do you see a way out?

NB: Professional translators will emerge when they know that there will be proper remuneration for them. If a writer knows that some reputed publishing concern outside the state is interested in her work, she can take the initiative for getting her work translated.

PG: What would be your reaction to the idea of setting up a publishing house to cater to this region i.e. the N.E. to publish good works in different subject areas working with good translators and to expose the local regional literature to a wider audience? Is there scope for this sort of venture?

NB: It's a good idea and there is a fair amount of scope for this kind of work. But once again the translators have to be motivated.

PG: What is the literary scene like here now and in your growing years? And how has this helped in your own writing?

NB: The scene has never been very bright for Assamese writers. Assamese writers can take to writing only as a hobby, not embrace it as a profession. Novels sell the most, but it takes a long time to sell a few thousand copies of a novel—sometimes 5–6 years. Assamese books are also quite cheap, which means that the royalty for writers is on a beggarly scale. The Assamese do not really have a penchant for reading. Recently there has been an explosion in newspaper and magazine

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publication in Assam, which means that the few readers are diverted to these instead of substantial creative works.

PG: What do you think the present generation of writers is achieving and how are their writings different from those of an earlier generation? What are the new trends in Assamese writing? Who are the outstanding young writers today?

NB: One doesn't see too many bright new stars on the literary firmament. Of course, there are some very talented young people, but it's the older writers who are still more acceptable to the reading public. The newer writers must display a greater earnestness and diligence. Many of the newer writers are busy experimenting with form; they display a dalliance with aspects of post-modernism such as 'magic realism.' Outstanding among the newer writers are Debabrata Das, Phanindra Deb Chaudhuri, Jyotish Sikder, Nabanita Gogoi and Mausumi Kandali among fiction writers, and Samir Tanti, Sananta Tanti, Jiban Narah, Ishmael Hussain, Anupama Basumatary, and Bipuljyoti Saikia among poets.

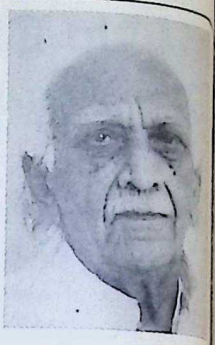
PG: Is there a reflection of the crisis and violence in Assam in its literature or is a length of time needed before a perspective is achieved and it can be portrayed with and dealt with? Is the work prolific or scanty like literature from Partition that is now gaining in importance 50 years later?

NB: Some writers have tried to grapple with the crisis and violence in Assam, but there has been no truly memorable effort. None of them approach a work such as *Peshawar Express* written about the Partition. Thus these works will leave no real imprint on the pages of literary history, although they may have a certain documentary worth.

PG: Who are your favourite writers in Assam and in other Indian writing?

NB: I have several favourites among Assamese authors. To name a few: Saurabh Kumar Chaliha, Bhaben Saikia, Naba Kanta Barua, Atulananda Goswami, Hiren Bhattacharya, etc. Among the pre-war writers one has to name Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Ambikagiri Roychaudhuri, Bishnu Rabha, Laxmi Nath Bezboruah and Birinchi Barua. I like Rabindra Nath Tagore and Prem Chand among other Indian writers.

Awarded



The Saraswati Samman, instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation a few years ago, is recognized as the most prestigious and the highest literary honour in the country. It is given every year to an outstanding literary work written in any Indian language. *Kurukshetra* (Gujarati) a novel by Shri Manubhai Rajaram Pancholi 'Darshak' has been awarded the Saraswati Samman for 1997.

Sri Pancholi is an ardent follower of Gandhian philosophy, a keen scholar of history, a known thinker, a revered teacher, an eminent educationist and above all a dedicated worker in the cause of social welfare. Born on 2 November, 1914, Sri Pancholi had no formal education because he gave up his school to participate in the freedom struggle in 1930. Sri Pancholi began his literary career in 1935. He has to his credit 4 dramas, 5 works of character-centred writing, 5 books on literary criticism including 2 reflecting the process of the development of his own sensibility by reading great master-pieces, 3 books of letters and a number of books on his thinking regarding social concerns. Essentially a novelist, he has so far written 8 novels in the great tradition of Goverdhanram, the father of modern Gujrati literature, K.M. Munshi and Ramanlal Desai.

The Saraswati Samman winning novel *Kurukshetra* was published in 1991 is basically a mythological story, not a restatement of it. It has been reinterpreted with the emphasis on the present day class and caste clashes, redressal of the injustice caused to people and thereby bringing about a unity between them and establishment of justice.

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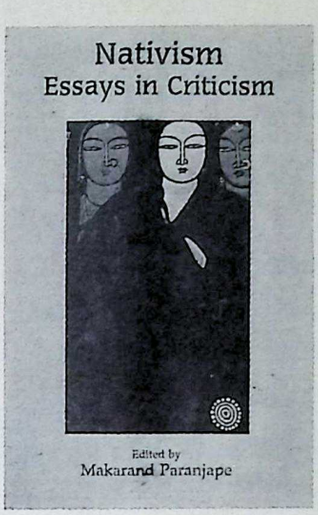
Nativism:
Emerging Consciousness

Sanjoy Dutta-Roy

NATIVISM: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM
Edited by Makarand Paranjape
Sahitya Akademi, 1997, pp. 270, Rs. 100.00



Today, there is a lot of talk going on in academic circles about post-colonialism and decolonisation. The seminar on "Nativism" or "Desivad" (Sponsored by the Sahitya Academy and the Centre for Creative Writing and Publication, IIT Kanpur), out of which this book has emerged, is actually a part of that larger discussion. The focus is sharper here in the sense that the agenda is understanding India and its multicultural, multilingual ethos and literature in its own terms. The problem, as I understand it from the book, seems to arrange itself at three levels: (1) There is the question of decolonization of our literary studies, of freeing our mind from the artificial hierarchy that dominates our educational system and its influence. The spectre of the British, and now the Euro-American ghost, dominates the scenario at various levels in the urban and educational centres in India. English studies and the importance of the English language and its smart baggage of accessories is perhaps the most apparent cause and case-study. The artificial hierarchy might be detrimental to our confidence, but the opening up of our cultures with their exposure to the West has also had its salutary effect. The essential debate centres around these two aspects—the positive and the negative. (2) There is the problem of trying to discover some basis for understanding the unifying principle in terms of a national character or identity that could be free of both the urban English modern elitism or the Brahmanical Sanskrit Classical elitism. Whether such a principle exists, or whether it would simply be a fictional creation (for political, cultural or religious purposes) becomes a subject of discussion. (3) There is the stark uncharted reality of the multilingual, multicultural India. Illiteracy here has in a unique way, been the preserver of the rich linguistic, literary and cultural traditions of the past. U.R. Ananthmurthy has been quoted by Sudhir Kumar in his essay in this book; "Many of our regional languages, despite their rich literary traditions, were actually preserved by illiteracy; for the literate of our country have always acquired the language of the ruling elites; whether it was Sanskrit, Persian or English". When the question of the recovery of these texts (lost and yet existing in popular memory in the oral, unwritten or unclassified traditions) comes, we are confronted by the fact of their relevance in the modern world. Before moving into an analysis of the essays in this book, I would like to record a few observations about the book.

Of the sixteen essays included in this book, eight are by teachers of English in various institutes, departments and Universities in India, including the editor's essay. I belong to the same category and can fully empathize with the soul-searching that our professional situation induces. After all, none of us created this system of education, nor did we frame the original models of the syllabi. We are by-products of historical forces (colonial in this case) and might feel at times that fifty years of independence from British rule is just the right time to look back, think and recover our memory of things that connect much further back in time and space (After Devy's diagnosis of Amnesia). I fully agree with Rajeev Seth (though professionally he does not belong to this category) when he says: "the crises of being alienated from history and culture affects the anglicised/Westernised elites more". With Debjani Ganguli, I too would like to applaud "the spurt of introspective sojourns undertaken by a few English Literature teachers, in order to relate their hitherto hidebound, insular discipline to the multilingual, multicultural ethos they inhabit". Rather than unquestioningly saluting the canons introduced by the British and still being subtly imported from Europe and America, seething pent-up feelings and ideas are surfacing in well-defined forms. The editor proclaims in his introduction: "Nativism, a line of thinking, is being given a voice and shape, however feeble and blurred".

The eight other essays are from writers and critics within the multilingual, multicultural ethos that Ganguli talks of. None of these eight are involved with the English language and its literary studies. Here the concern is not so much with the colonial impact or with decolonisation. Srimannarayana Murti's essay, for example, is not in the least concerned with the West and its influence on our literary studies. He is concentrating more on trying to understand the words "marga" and "desi" and the relationship between Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsas. His essay reveals how we can stay well within our own traditions of languages and literatures and indulge unself-consciously in a discourse that has contemporary relevance. Similarly Prasanna's attack on Desi Theatre is steeped in a discussion of theatre experiments born in the Indian soil, with only passing and cursory reference to theatre in the West, China and Japan. There is no reference to British theatre. Interestingly, the essay by Wagish Shukla, a mathematician, refers to a vast cross-cultural fertilization without "negative feelings". Mind and culture here appear essentially migratory, needing the native land only for "burial". These essays do not depend on the binary oppositions (East-West, Orient-Occident, India-England, Colonies-Imperial powers) that dominate most post-colonial discourses. And lying beyond both these categories are the vast uneducated rural masses who enter these discourses but cannot participate in them using their own voices.

The book gives a lot of importance to Devy and Nemade. Devy's *After Amnesia* is considered the base book in many of the discussions. Nemade's well known essay in Marathi is appended in its first English translation. Such an exercise might be good for critical focus but the debate has been in existence long before Devy or Nemade. The book and the Seminar should have been placed within the framework of the larger areas of discussion all over the world. In fact the editor has apologetically done so when he writes: "Nativism, far from being a totally unique or distinct cultural trend, is very much a part of the ongoing intellectual movements and debates of our times" (modernism, nationalism, post modernism—the so called cultural historical grand narratives). He knows, even as he says this, that this will be resented by Nemade "as another attempt to appropriate and subvert a nativistic project". Moreover, I think that the book's concern goes further back to the question of identity and selfhood in the individual, communal, national, international and universal sense. The problem of rootedness, tradition, modernity, exile, migrancy, conquest and influence, as many of the essays here have recognized are as old as time. It is an autobiographical concern and act where the memory goes back in time and space from the contemporary scenario to recover the past and come back to the present. Only Debjani Ganguli has mentioned Autobiography and Devy's text.

The book is divided into four sections with essays a) introducing the scope and span of the subject, b) giving the background of the discourse, c) charting the debates on various issues, d) revealing ways of practical application of the lines of thinking that emerge. This is a neat division but it entails and promises a far more detailed study than what is ultimately achieved.

In the introductory section Indranath Choudhury talks of grand forces in a state of conflict and tension: a) Past and Present b) Tradition and Modernity c) East and West. He brings in the Indian context through the concept of "Kula" (heredity, inheritance and tradition) and "Shila" (the making of man conditioned by "Kula" and the existing environment). His is a liberal picture. He thinks of modernity in terms of the presence of traditional values as well as openness to new innovations. He gives the interesting example of the presence of Lord Ganesh in a modern Indian hospital foyer. Instead of the tendency of comparing every Indian literary text with some Euro-American product he advocates the introduction of *our* response to the West on *our* terms and thus gain cultural confidence. He points out

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K. Satchchidanandan in his essay, seems to be more concerned with "the threat from the market forces to serious Literature". This threat, which is in the form of "invasion of values" is fast swamping the Indian way of life and thinking. It is surely harmful to our confidence and can destroy or commercialize whatever beauty there exists in our culture and literature. It is indeed cause for concern at every level, cutting across regional and cultural boundaries within India. He hopes that a pan-Indian sensibility, born out of this concern, can unite sensitive writers.

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the double-edged equality of the term "Desi" where "Desi Sharab" is considered inferior to its western counterpart whereas "Desi Ghee" is considered better and more wholesome than its technologically prepared counterpart. Such an introduction places "nativism" or its opposite as attitudes of mind that permeate every sphere of life in modern India. Literary texts and the distribution and consumption of knowledge are peripheral to this central concern. They follow like corollaries. Devy's Keynote address, in contrast, though he does talk of the vaster cultural parameters, focusses on the problem of the literary critic working in the contemporary Indian intellectual climate. His model does seem to be a product of an anglicised educational system when he uses the metaphor of Karnad's *Hayavadana*: "Where these blood cells in this body of mine standing before you are made out of the Indian soil, air and water, the stock of knowledge stored in the brain seems to have come from elsewhere". One cannot wish away colonial history. But surely, he feels, one can resist the artificial hierarchy of knowledge imposed on us. Our education and our historiography should be devoted to the recovery of our lost cultural memory. We must introspect and see within ourselves as Krishna advised Arjuna on the battlefield. We must not forget that by "We" and "Our" Devy does not mean the rustic Indian. He means the urban, educated Indian, influenced by the western models. His use of the terms "naive" and "picaro" is interesting. "Native", he tells us, goes back to "naive"—meaning people who are landlocked, bound to their village and soil. They do not travel much and produce something of practical use to their community. In contrast are the "picaros" who are widely travelled men of the world. They were morally flexible and their knowledge is not derived from their understanding of the soil of their village, but is derived from their knowledge of human nature. It was only natural that during colonial expansion the "picaros" became Europe's cultural models. Rather than use these two categories to interpret history, it might be more fruitful if we applied it to the contemporary scenario (literary or otherwise) in India. We have the globe trotters and we have the landlocked and interesting literary works born right here in India today out of the blending of the two sensibilities.

K. Satchchidanandan in his essay, seems to be more concerned with "the threat from the market forces to serious Literature". This threat, which is in the form of "invasion of values" is fast swamping the Indian way of life and thinking. It is surely harmful to our confidence and can destroy or commercialize whatever beauty there exists in our culture and literature. It is indeed cause for concern at every level, cutting across regional and cultural boundaries within India. He hopes that a pan-Indian sensibility, born out of this concern, can unite sensitive writers. He gives examples in Indian history where similar pan-Indian phenomena occured: "the Bhakti poets rejected priesthood, turned from Sanskrit to the people's tongues. The movement brought together peoples, religions, languages and literatures laying a solid multilingual foundation for Indian Literature. The unity was further strengthened by the anti-colonial and reform oriented literary movements... the Bhakti movement was basically a subaltern pan-Indian phenomenon". The "intertextuality within culture", the "heteroglossia", the "cultural plurality" realized at a more realistic conceptual level is the future project of which the nativist deconstruction of the existing concepts shall be a part. The only problem that I have with this theory is to conceive it as a project for the future. Again, we are making it an academic exercise. The Bhakti movement, I am sure, was never conceived as a project but evolved out of the necessity that cut across regional and religious boundaries.

The second section deals with the background of nativistic consciousness. Three different ways of looking at this background are explored. Patankar concentrates on the historical background of the Indo-British encounter, traces the rise of the middle-class in Bengal, the acquaintance with British systems (business contracts/law), areas of knowledge (natural and human sciences), methodology (rational prose), literature. The point that he makes about "assimilation" and "subjection" is of course nothing unique. We know that to be culturally suppressed without comparison or competition is bad and selective assimilation from another culture is good. Even his formula for having a native criterion for evaluating native traditions sounds good and so does his formula for having a universal criterion for the multinational. But somehow I cannot see these formulae and equations in as simple a manner as he does. There has been so much of blending and cross-cultural fertilization over this same period of history that he has covered that I am left quite confused. But his historical survey is praiseworthy. In fact Wagish Shukla's essay coming just after it does away entirely with the compartmentalising (even for conveniences sake) of the native and the other. The very conceptualizing of a pure native source unsullied by other cultural influences is seen as ridiculous. It never existed anywhere in the world, nor did it ever exist in India. Maybe Shukla has a point here. But the point could be read inversely too. We have to return to replenish the native consciousness, vitalize our soil, after all our journeys. Otherwise we are lost.

In direct contrast to both the essays discussed in Srimannarayana Murti's essay. The multinational or global consciousness does not even enter into the discussion, neither does the Indo-British or East West encounter. He goes into the linguistic roots of the terms "marga" and "desi" to dwell well within the cultural boundary of India. He comes out with certain observations which could have a lot of significance to-day. "Marga" in its root form has connotations of "to chase" (a wild forest animal), "to cleanse", "to purify". The path of the hunter is "marga". Marga by its derivation presupposes for its motif the existence of something wild, savage, fierce, passionate, growing in a state of nature, uncivilized, uncultivated. This has to be domesticated, cultivated, civilized, tamed, controlled. Thus the relationship between "marga" and "desi" is established. The emergence of the "marga" from the "desi" is a natural process by contraction and convergence of ideas, so as to yield uniformity and universal acceptability, assimilation and system in communication as well as in society (even the concept of a nation). But interestingly, systematization and codes of rules produce monotony. It leads to divergence, expansion into the "Desi" for vitality and fresh life. Such cyclicity has been conceived differently in different cultures. I am reminded of Blake's "negation" (close to the civilizing contraction here) and "contraries" (the wild expansive consciousness), the Appollonian and the Dionysiac, Bakhtin's Carnivalistic multiplicity of voices and the singular narrative voice. Murti has given the example of the influence of the Sanskrit pundits on the use of language. Grammarians like Patanjali and Bhratrihari took exception to the recognizing of the full value of the Prakrits and Apabhramsas, which are branded as corrupt forms. These languages could be used for social communication. But for the higher religious activities the "marga" Sanskrit was right. Bharata, interestingly, recognizes Prakrit in all its dialects as accepted language in drama. After all drama as a form is based on multiplicity of voices and thus has to be close to the people. Murti's essay convinces me that when a contemporary mind applies itself to the understanding of our linguistic and cultural roots, what can be discovered in our native sources are bound to have relevance in the modern or post modern times. After all human thinking everywhere has been on shared concerns, and evolution essentially has common origins and patterns.

The third Section—"Debates"—tries to pit varying viewpoints against each other. But the structuring is not clear enough. I have tried to read a structure that might or might not exist in the editor's plan.

Gurbhagat Singh's essay argues against the "uninationalist paradigm of Gandhi, Nehru, Kabir" that followed the enlightenment circumscribed nationalist framework. He feels that such paradigms were good as liberationist tactic, but were imaginary rather than real. They have "played their historic and contributory role". To extend them further would be to block the growth and interpretation of India. He calls this paradigm "the great betrayal of polyphony". He advocates the pushing for a confederate political set-up which would recognize the dialogic presence

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of various voices in the Bhasha literatures that do not adopt the Western or Indian mainstream models. His essay has both political and literary implications when it puts its voice against the counter-confederative totalitarian nationalist framework and its literary manifestations. Sudhir Kumar's essay says the same thing differently. He shows that the term "rashtra" focusses more on the political nation than on the people or "jana". The Sanskrit term "rashtra" appears to be more hegemonic as it expressly valorizes the rule or governance over "the people or jana". The motive behind his argument is to provoke a retrieval of the original meaning of nation or "rashtra" as the people or "jana" in order to oppose or subvert any authoritarian structure imposed on our democracy. Both the essays speak theoretically for the people, the jana, in India's case, the voices of its illiterate majority. Sudhir Kumar realizes the tragedy of our western education that has alienated "us" utterly from the peasant—the seventy percent illiterate Indian mass. So does Rajee Seth when she talks of two separate levels—the level of the circles of academic (she means the anglicised western elites more here) and the "common people". .

Prasanna short-circuits these theoretical concerns when he speaks as a practitioner in theatre and reveals the hidden realities of an overdose of Desivad in theatre (where the biggest attempts at introducing Desivad had really happened). Singh's idealization of "polyphony", Kumar's "jana" or Seth's "common people" could create chaos and problems in contemporary or modern theatre. Prasanna says that he is a contemporary person and he need not use the masks of Kathakali or the headgear or the Chhende of Yakshagana. All he needs is the narrative—and that is really rich—even from the contemporary point of view: "The narrative as we find it in Indian tradition is so fabulous that it would probably take me five generations to understand it". As for the rest, it is better and more wholesome for the contemporary person to challenge and fight tradition and thus comprehend it. He gives the example of what Tagore did in his dance-dramas, what Vallathol did in Kathakali and what Shivaram Karanth did to Yakshagana. By fighting tradition one can make it richer.

The two other essays in this section—Debajani Ganguli's and Makarand Paranjape's (who is also the editor of this volume)—are critiques of Devy's text (*After Amnesia*). They bring out some interesting angles that have not been properly explored in any of the other essays in the volume. For example Ganguli criticizes Devy for his self and the other, his East-West reductionism. It makes Devy overlook i) the effects of the Islamic invasions, ii) the more complex interface of gender, class, caste and religion within the native culture itself: "Amnesia is brought on not merely by the colonial rule, but by the systematic repression by the patriarchal set up within the native culture itself". Paranjape, both in his introduction and his essay, becomes the lone voice defending the use of the English language for literary expression in India, giving it a respectability in native culture that is equal to any of the regional languages. He is very right when he says: "A native writer may actually be indulging in non native cultural practices, while a so-called non-native writer in English actually aiding and strengthening native traditions". Is not this book itself in its use of English a good example of the second case? Against Devy's and Nemade's rejection of Indian English Literature he advocates a more open view of nativism that is able to gracefully accept the English language within its folds. However, he admits that no pidgin or Creole English has emerged in which the common people in India can express themselves, I would like to state here that varied local versions have recognizably emerged. These versions have, over these many years, been slowly finding effective expression in drama, fiction and poetry.

I find the final section—"Practice"—quite inadequate. The span of the Introduction, Background and Debate is interdisciplinary. The three essays by Anand Patil, Ajit Thakor and Jaidev are a very thin representation of the kind of practice that could emerge from such a discourse. They are good examples of literary criticism born in our soil—but is that all? All of them are on fiction. There is nothing on poetry or drama. I feel that this section should have included essays that look deep into our education system (it its various stages), essays which were examples of the writing of Subaltern history, essays discussing our indigenous thinking on politics and economics, to give just a few examples.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is a praiseworthy effort to give momentum to a dialogue and a discourse that should go a long way. The book is open ended. It is part of an ongoing process of thinking that has the multifaceted and multilingual India at its very centre.

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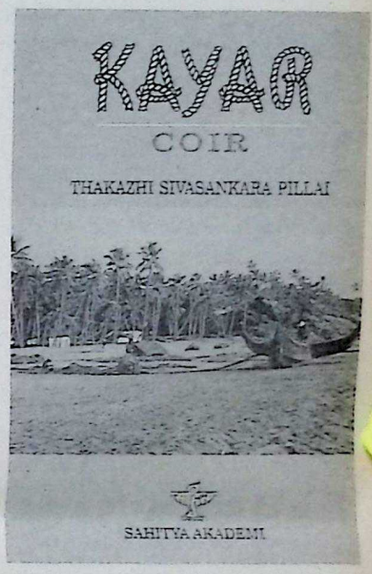
A Quest for Land in History

P. Krishnanunni

COIR (*KAYAR*)

By Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai.
Translated from the Malayalam by N. Sreekantan Nair

Sahitya Akademi, 1997, pp. 736, Rs. 275.00



"Any one who steps into this river will not get out of it completely wet and drenched with mud", says an old adage about Kerala history. But, this adage does not fit with Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, the *Karanavar* (Head of the family) of Malayalam literature. Thakazhi's *Coir* (Kayar), perhaps, is the only historical novel in Malayalam which portrays graphically the end of different eras and the beginning of modern societies, which in turn, mark what Malayalis call *Nava Kerala* (Modern Kerala). In his macabre project of depicting Kerala history, Thakazhi's imagination goes back to the situation of Kerala in the mid-nineteenth century. The author is least bothered about the historical documents available at that time, and makes use of his imagination run superior to the documents. A fiction, thus constructed, raises certain questions: What is the relation of history with truth? Can history written from pure imagination counter all edicts and documents? Can such a history serve as a tool for posterity, and how far does the historian/narrator function as a source of authenticity?

Thakazhi begins his novel by describing the gradual change seeping into the feudal Brahminical class of Kerala in the nineteenth century. The Nair community, which had always thrived under the tutelage of Namboodiris, gets a chance to acquire some portion of land, which later helps them to question several norms associated with the feudal matriarchal set up of both these communities. As the sambandhams (marriages) between the Namboodiris and Nairs were regarded as a permissible social custom, the author implies that this social cohesion played a major role in the disintegration of the hegemonic Nair class. The Classifiers, the King's appointed people to measure the land and to decide what has to be done on them, were capable of establishing well-knit connections and engaging in sexual trafficking wherever they went. With the depiction of Kochu Pillai, the Classifier, Thakazhi describes the degenerated morals of the Nair community. The disintegration of the Brahmins is marked by their excessive greed and extravagance in administration. By giving the example of a Brahmin called Sesnayyan, who was forced to marry Kochupennu Kunjamma, the author sacrastically portrays the Brahmin class. Both Sesnayyan and Kunjamma are not chaste, and the latter has an affair with the Classifier, Seshayyan's counterpart from the Nair Community. The quest for land, therefore, is a metaphor of sexual promiscuity in Thakazhi, and all classes of people in the social hierarchy are subjected to it. It is into such a society the author introduces the Christians and Muslims.

The novel is shut to the beginnings of Christianity in Kerala. Outha, the first Christian we come across in the text, is an upset man because he cannot enter the temple compounds of Hindus. The Paruthikattil Christians of which Outha is a member, supply various oils required by the people of that area. This strange relationship of a Christian family associated with the Namboodiri *madhoms* and Nair *tharavads* is a re-writing of the history of Christianity in Kerala. The popular belief that Christians were detested by Namboodiris and Nairs is negated by the author. On the other hand, the laziness of Nairs

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and Namboodiris, the author ironically suggests, gave rise to the Christian community. The author's praise of the Christians for their remarkable business skills and shrewd tactics, to a great extent, is deserved and is not previously recorded in any official history of Kerala.

One would sometimes wonder whether the author has seriously examined the history of untouchables (Parayas and Pulayas) in Kerala in the last century. The abrupt twists and turns the author creates can be questioned. A lot of Parayas and Pulayas who were given only half a day's wages as a gift after their hard labour in the paddy fields from the Nair families, the author suggests, turned to Christianity when the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) started converting the coastal people. The tensions which prevailed among the untouchables and the other members of Hindu society at the time of the conversion are not seriously analyzed by the author. His assumption that Christianity offered the untouchables in Kerala an Edenic paradise is not entirely true, while a good number of untouchables found it difficult to break away from their Brahmin masters. For them, the Gospel remained as something unidentifiable, yet can be wished for. Further, we read about a Pulaya boy called Vattathan changing his religion and becoming a Muslim. Before Tipu's invasion, it is hard to believe that such conversions into Islam took place in Kerala. This deliberate play of the novelist with his imagination perplexes several historical view points. It should be noted that Thakazhi's narrative never changes a bit from its unilinear stream of flow. Later, when the author describes Tipu's invasion, he provides a detailed description of how several Namboodiris were converted into Islam. Thus, a conglomeration of different races has sowed the first seeds of modernity on the soil of Kerala.

The transition of Kerala societies from tradition to modernity is marked by a series of ups and downs. The early twentieth century Kerala witnessed a lot of clashes between tradition and modernity. By giving the example of Kesavan Pillai of Seelanthipillil, Thakazhi describes how the backlash of tradition acted upon those people who wanted a change in their society. The school run by Kesavan Pillai for the untouchables was burned to ashes by the conservative Hindu community. Further, the author portrays in detail the social reform movements initiated by Sri Narayana Guru and Chattambi Swamikal and shows how these movements coloured the perception of Keralites about the national uprisings against the British Raj. Much of man's potentialities are called into question when he/she confronts the national issue. By relating various social movements of Kerala to several other political uprisings all over the country, Thakazhi succeeds in showing that the history of any place can never be condensed. The individual traumas are juxtaposed with a society's concerns, and the attitudes of several revolutionaries, traitors, conservatives and pseudomodernists are well brought out.

The thought-provoking section of the novel is the final part in which the novelist returns to the question of land and gives it a new political dimension. Surendran, the freedom fighter and the most derided Communist leader, is a classic example of Thakazhi's question: Is there an end to human desire? Like the Classifier, this character also indulges in immoral sexual trafficking. Later, when the Naxalites brand him as their class enemy, the author gently touches upon the rise of the early Naxalite movement in Kerala without getting into the core of the matter.

Man's struggle for land and freedom is an everlasting one. Since the land reforms of Kerala has only served to enrich the capitalist class, the clash between the haves and have nots will not end ever. The question of land and man's unending desire for it, as the novelist depicts them, invites a comparison with some novels of the historical genre written by Latin American writers like Jorge Amado and Miguel Angel Austurias. But unlike these Latin American authors, Thakazhi's narrative transcends the limits of history. In its vast scope, *Coir* challenges all the notions of Lyotardian 'meta-narratives' of constructing a postmodern text. The different mythical tales, rituals and festivals interwoven in his narrative, in their entirety, constructs a realistic text. One can question Thakazhi's imagination, but not the problems he raises.

The late Shri N. Sreekantan Nair's English translation, sad to say, suffers from a lot of pitfalls. A text deeply rooted in a culture can only be trans-*created*, not translated. Nair, in his hasty translation has retained a number of vernacular terms, which he has forgotten to give in the glossary. At some places, Nair has condensed some incidents into a single sentence. Several pages require good proof reading and worst of all, some typographical errors are unpardonable. In his Herculean task, had Nair ever thought of the readers (especially, non-Keralites) reading his translation?

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Doleful, Dolorous, Malodorous

Keki N. Daruwalla

SET MY HEART IN ASPIC

By Nisha da Cunha

Harper Collins India, 1997, pp. 186, Rs. 145.00

Halfway through Nisha da Cunha's second short story book I thought of Keats's *Ode to Melancholy*, and looked up the poem after forty years or so. No, I did not find an emotional equivalent in the poem for the kind of pensive sadness that pervades her book. And the poem was all about Lethe and wolf's bane and nightshade and Proserpine and one couldn't relate to it anymore. (It is not just language that gets dated. The images, myths, concerns which the language voiced once also become dated. Today we would react to cyanide, not nightshade. And our Proserpines would be the likes of the venerable Mayawati or that other well built lady from the south—both Hitler and Eva Braun in one.) Keats's melancoly "dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die/ and joy whose hand is ever at his lips". No such aesthetic binds Ms. da Cunha's stories.

Moreover the melancholy of Keats is transient and sudden:

> *But when the melancholy fit shall fall*
> *Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud. .*

Nisha de Cunha is herself the weeping cloud. To carry this tiresome analogy a little further, I must say that the Ode did not ring true. (Keats wrote better than a dozen good poems in his short lifetime). Quite a few of Nisha's stories sound authentic.

There is a rhythm and a flow about Nisha da Cunha's writing. Through mood, texture and narrative her personal stamp gets embossed upon the story almost imperceptibly. A sharp reader would easily be able to spot a story by her, even if it went under an anonymous byline. The writing is crystal clear and smooth like a mountain stream flowing over rounded pebbles.

Even though most of the stories are in the third person, the author identifies closely with the characters. Normally that is easier done in first person narratives. She conjures up a sort of an ecology of the spirit and the reader finds herself/himself in a hothouse of feeling. Though the stories are tragic—if that's the word—the atmosphere is not heavy with foreboding. These are not, after all, stories fashioned after the gothic novel. The melancholy is matter-

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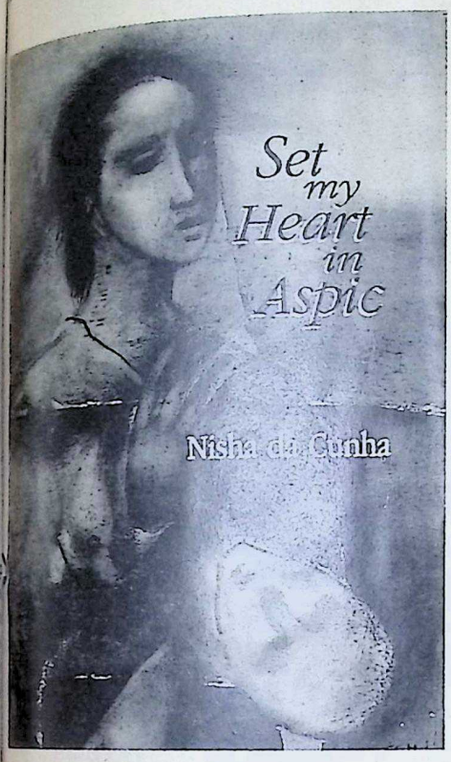

she returns to Aunt Meg to have Kim's baby in the house he had grown up in. But this skeleton of a plot does no justice to the story, which reads like a poem.

"Set my Heart in Aspic" starts with a funeral for two. The story unfolds through a monologue of sorts regarding the events that led to the deaths. The story unfolds through these narratives. But where this cinematic technique (popularized by Khorosawa) is used something more is expected by the reader than just the unveiling of the plot. With each narrative the core of events should itself be subjected to protean changes. Otherwise where is the fun in five narratives in one story? This is not to take away from the merit of the piece. It has a flow and a fluency about it despite the funerary atmosphere. Among the sub-plots (if that's the word) is the one about two sisters loving the same rotter. "It was Mama who said 'Yes, go to your far-away place, I'll miss you very much but he's a bad one that Rui and Tessa will rue the day she married him and I am sorry he had to be your first way of finding out about loving someone. First love is the worst in terms of suffering but strangely it does stop one day and you wonder how you could have agonized so desperately over someone.' How simply and beautifully put.

The class room lurks in the wings. Every now and then a situation reminds her of some university text or other. And there is one first person account "The Girl in Burka, Riding a cycle" where two of her bright students, a Catholic and a Muslim, marry after the January riots in Bombay and move to Karjat where they live an almost ascetic life.

There are a few careless misprints, but none worse than on the last page (acknowledgements). Here Cavafy is spelled as "Canafy", Hopkins as "Gerard Marley (instead of Manley) Hopkins and Auden as "Anden" if you please. But they got Golding right. So can one really complain?

Nisha da Cunha is one of our best short story writers. But really Miss, at least once in a while, can't some *bhoola, bhakta* smile, light up your lips?

Keki N. Daruwalla is a poet and writer.

Letter from London

Stephen Moss

A book editor has to walk a tightrope: between news values and literary values; between the book as event and the book as book; between journalism and, at the risk of sounding pompous, art. Anthony Curtis, who was literary editor of the *Financial Times* in the sixties and of the *Sunday Telegraph* for two decades until 1990, recently produced a book of memoirs, called *LitEd*, in which he said the job could only be done successfully if you were equally interested in the books and journalism. Be unduly arcane and you will (rightly) irritate your colleagues; be "just" a journalist and the book becomes nothing more than a here-today-gone-tomorrow occurrence, ephemeral, forgettable.

In UK literary journalism in the past decade or so the balance has swung away from the book as artifact and towards the book as event, and it becomes increasingly hard to isolate the substance of the book from the surrounding sensationalism. Two recent examples have underlined the point—Gitta Sereny's book on the life of child murderer Mary Bell, published by Macmillan UK in May, and Hanif Kureishi's new novel *Intimacy*, published by Faber in the same month.

The Bell book, which had been cloaked in secrecy because of the subject matter, generated extraordinary comment and anger when it was revealed that Bell—who is now free and has been furnished with a new identity to protect her daughter—had been paid to cooperate with Sereny, who is famous for her great biography of the Nazi war criminal Albert Speer.

The book was serialized in the *Times*, questions were raised in the House of Commons, Bell and her daughter (who now for the first time learned of her mother's past) had to flee from packs of newshounds. The book was delivered to shops on the day of publication, which meant in effect that the whole debate about the book took place without the book having been read by anyone. It was the principle of the book that was debated, rather than the book itself.

Similarly, the Kureishi novel—a thinly veiled treatment of the acrimonious breakdown of his marriage—generated features, interviews, angry letters from his sister, endless debate, but little discussion of the book itself. Perhaps in this case it was impossible to read the book as anything other than a *roman-à-clef*; few even tried.

These examples reflect a growing trend for the book to be forgotten in the journalistic pursuit of the story. In our culturally aware age, books are likely to crop up everywhere—on news pages, feature pages, interview pages. There is a real appetite—certainly among newspaper editors, presumably among their readers—for what Gore Vidal christened "book chat". That is all to the good—books can now inform every section of a newspaper. The disadvantage is that the review—and this applies right across the arts—can be downgraded. The role of the critic is everywhere under threat—the taste now is for celebrity interviewers, solipsistic columnists, feature-led theme pieces.

When Anthony Curtis and his equally resilient contemporaries Terence Kilmartin of the *Observer* and W.L. Webb of the *Guardian* began their lengthy stints in the late fifties, the critic ruled—Kenneth Tynan and Harold Hobson in theatre, Dilys Powell and C.A. Lejeune in cinema, Cyril Connolly and Philip Toynbee, and later Anthony Burgess, in books. It would be foolish to argue for a return to a sort of tweedy critical hegemony, to a gentlemen's club of critics upholding timeless literary values, but we should be aware of the dangers of letting hype replace judgement, of swapping Connolly's 10-year test for five minutes of newsy fun. What does Sereny's book tell us about child abuse, evil, the possibilities of recovery? Is Kureishi's book effective as a novel, a memoir, a polemic? When the dust has settled, let the thinking begin.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of the Guardian.

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Sweeping Away Cobwebs

Dhananjay Kapse

THE LACKADAISICAL SWEEPER: COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH

By Gauri Deshpande

East West Books, Madras, 1997, pp. 213, Rs. 135.00

Who or what is a "Lackadaisical Sweeper"? If you think the title of this book (or the story within) slightly strange, what then will you think of "Vervain", or "Insy Winsy Spider", titles of two other stories? Or maybe you should try this, "Hookworm, Lamprey, Tick, Fluke and Flea", which opens this volume. It certainly had me scurrying for my dictionary. But I suppose I should have been prepared. Gauri Deshpande delights in being teasingly difficult and different. Having read all her work in Marathi—eight novels, a book of short stories, a collection of anecdotal essays apart from a monumental translation of Richard Burton's *A Thousand and One Nights* as well as poetry in English. I had been looking forward to reading her long awaited collection of short stories in English. The wait has been worthwhile.

R. Raj Rao in a largely perceptive "Afterword", comments, "Gauri Deshpande's life and writings are an extension of each other, a part of an ongoing process; separate the two and you have an incomplete understanding of both." However one is disappointed not to find any elaboration of this by Rao, perhaps due to lack of adequate knowledge about the details of her life. But I can't help reading these stories biographically. Some background information may be in order.

Daughter of Principal G.D. Karve and Professor Iravati Karve, the famous anthropologist, essayist, and author of *Yuganta*, the celebrated study of the *Mahabharata*, Gauri Deshpande has erudition and independent thinking flowing in her veins from birth. Her maternal grandmother (Aai) lived in Burma at the beginning of the century when few women were exposed to outside influences, and her paternal grandmother (baya) a remarried child-widow, lived a fulfilling if at times turbulent married life with Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve, the pioneer of women's emancipation in Maharashtra. Gauri Deshpande's uncle Raghunath Dhondo Karve started the movement about family planning and education about sexuality in India in the face of virulent opposition and helping him was her aunt the essayist Shakuntala Paranjpe, daughter of 'Rangler' Paranjpe and mother of the renowned film-maker Sai Paranjpe. You can't ask for a more illustrious family.

The reader's appreciation of the story "Rose Jam" is immensely enriched by a knowledge of these facts. It is in fact a fictional reworking of the essays she has written about her family. But even if one doesn't know these details, the story still works on its own. Any perceptive reader will figure out the numerous swipes at the—by now—clichéd and stereotyped magic and exoticism of Indo-Anglian writing, that the story takes *en passant*. Her recent caustic comments about *The God of Small Things* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* take issue with such books catering to and feeding into the West's image of India. In "Rose Jam" as the narrator points out again and again, her family was "unusual enough in that place at that time" but hardly magical or interestingly oriental. "They may have taken the small steps that led India into the modern age, but that is because they did not know that no one else in the world wanted India to be anything but a quaint outpost of the Raj."

Like the narrator of "Rose Jam", Gauri Deshpande in her writing has always resisted being labelled, or categorized, or being forced to put on a disguise. From the beginning she has prized her unfettered imagination, refusing to write in a way that is expected of her as a woman or as an Indian. That's why she writes a story like "Vervain" set entirely in the West and peopled by western characters. The narrator, curiously nicknamed Li-Ta (Li for Elizabeth, Ta for Carlotta), grows up in World War Two Germany, in hardship, deprivation, flight and fight for survival. Her mother dies early and at the age of ten she becomes "mother, companion, chatelaine, cook-housekeeper, confidante and advisor to three men"—her father and two brothers. In marriage, in her late thirtees, to a sailor twelve years older than her, she finds some stability and happiness in Luxemburg, away from memories of the War. With two children, unteutonically named Paul and Mark, she is everything to three men again. But her happiness or "false consciousness" as a feminist might say, is shattered when she discovers her husband's infidelity. If Gauri Deshpande's stories were tracts as R. Raj Rao opines, because "her narrators seem too cocksure (sic) of their opinions" then this story would have ended with Li-Ta finding a feminist freedom—as offered by her visitor D.T. But what in fact happens is that she can't fight her way out and is sucked back into her fifty-year long comforting—and deadening—routine of caring for her "men".

If Gauri Deshpande writes against the repressive traditions of patriarchy, she also uncompromisingly depicts the internalization of these norms by women themselves, in stories like "Hookworm, Lamprey, Tick, Fluke and Flea"—which incidentally are names of various fish used as baits and thus symbolically stand for the five women friends who find themselves being 'Stupid Samaritans', compelled to help their friend Jenny who as it turns out, does not want a job, nor Liberation but only being an "unpaid slave to her boys, those worthless penniless drunkards and wastrels." In "Insy Winsy Spider" she shows a feminist, achieving mother being stumped by her own daughter who, though brought up politically correctly—or perhaps because of that—refuses college education and wants to get married and set up house at the age of eighteen. Instead of analyzing how a child grasps the difference between itself and its mother, the story asks, "when does a mother begin to differentiate between herself and her baby?... What are 'we', when we are 'we'?" It is not a one track feminist agenda that dominates Gauri Deshpande's writings, but a near obsessive search for freedom, not just freedom from external restrictions but also freedom from oneself whenever there is the slightest danger of that 'self' ossifying.

And her quirky imagination and sharp sense of humour enable her to portray her characters from within, ferretting out their inconsistencies and self-contradictions but always in an involved, sympathetic manner, as in the stories "Morgan in Disguise" and "A Harmless Girl".

Interaction between different cultures has always been a major theme of Gauri Deshpande's work in Marathi. Almost all her novels feature Indi... Maharashtrian-heroines who for a s... live abroad, not in familiar U.K. U.S.A. but in unfamiliar Japan ... Greece, reflecting the globe-trott... peripatetic life of the author herse... the Tokyo setting is used as a m... backdrop in "Whatever Happened ... (clearly the least satisfying story in ... volume), it assumes enormous imp... tance in "Smile and Smile and... when the smug Indian narrator-woman—is brought up short aga... the reality that her Japanese subordin... Mayuri, whom she has been trying ... force into her mould, is irreconcila... different from her, as a *hibakusha*, a ch... of the Bomb.

In both "Brand New Pink Nike ... and "Dmitri in the Afternoon" t... middle aged Indian protagonists a... transformed by a causal *non-sexual* e... counter with foreign men (Americ... and Greek) and their jaded marria... get a new lease of life, a theme ve... common in her Marathi works. It's n... just the foreignness of these men wh... is attractive (though one wonders w... they are invariably tall, large and whi... skinned) but they seem to represent ... different, fresher way of looking at l... There are no gushing emotions ... purple prose here *a la* Mills and Bo... romances—in any case these are tra... sient, fleeting encounters—but th... seem to enable the protagonists to pe... ceive themselves in a different way, ... break out of a habituated prison ... society's—and their own—making.

Which leads us nicely into the ar... romantic story "Habits", where t... narrator is "thoroughly alarmed at t... prospect of forming a habit. Any hab... and has become a "rather peculiar an... unreliable sort of person." And whe... her new office colleague determine... that someone must look after her an... her children, to give her an 'identity'... sense of pride in herself, and when sh... learns with horror that he lives the mo... regular, time-bound, routine lif... imaginable, her first action is to ru... away from him to continue her mess... shabby but 'independent' life.

With all the different cultural inte... actions, an inter-racial marriage had ... figure in this book, and in "Hell... Stranger" and "The Debt" we have tw... very different, but equally sensitiv... treatments of this theme. The India... protagonist of "Hello Stranger", mar... ried to an American and "grafted ont... her culture after he was all grown-up ... has left most of his past behind, s... much so, that when memories com... flooding back when he is awaiting the ... birth of his child, it makes him acutely ... uncomfortable. And when he holds the ... new-born baby, "This was it, he knew ... This was the final irrevocable step...

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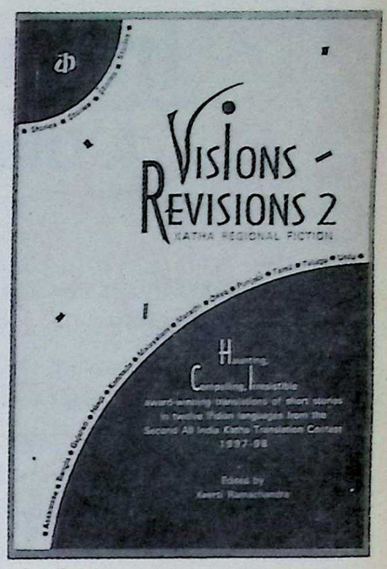
Probing the Human Condition

M. Vijayalakshmi

VISIONS REVISIONS 2: KATHA REGIONAL FICTION
Edited by Keerti Ramachandra
Katha, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 169, Rs. 150.00

The book under review, second in the Katha series and the outcome of an all-India translation workshop organized in collaboration with the British Council, contains twelve short stories by well-known writers. As a genre the short story presents a wide variety of forms in its subcontinental avatar. The short story gained prominence and reader-following mainly in the earlier decades of this century due in large measure to the growth of popular language journals. Unlike the novel the short story does not probe every aspect of the totality of life. To paraphrase a Tamil critic, K. Sivattambi, the short story probes an underlying human condition or emotion. Its characters are delineated, not 'evolved'. The truth or predicament which the characters confront in the course of their actions forms the nucleus of the short story. The short story must lead the reader to a mental or emotional state which should be created not by recourse to verbiage but without it i.e. the reader should arrive at it unawares. The length of a story does not necessarily define a short story. Operating within this philosophical framework the Indian short story tradition has employed a variety of story telling techniques including the traditional oral forms of the fable, fantasy, allegory and the parable. It will be an interesting exercise to explore as to which language draws most from which of these traditions.

Coming to the present collection the short stories present an engaging variety of themes and styles. The Assamese and Oriya stories ("Rainmaker" by Harendra Kumar Bhuyan translated by Apratim Barua and "The Other God" by Pratibha Ray translated by Monalisa Dani) concern societal aspects and are narrated like an allegory and a parable respectively. The Bengali, Gujarati and Hindi stories ("Nandita" by Bani Basu, translated by Jaya Banerji, "Congratulations by Bindu Bhatt translated by Kamal Sanyal, and "Crows" by Mrinal Pande, translated by Prasenjit Ranjan Gupta) explore failed or failing marriages. The Kannada and Malayalam stories ("A Scoundrel" by Shantinath Desai, translated by Padma C. Rao and "Sherlock" by M.T. Vasudevan Nair, translated by Sachi Madhavan) study alienated psyches, in entirely differing predicaments. The Marathi, Punjabi and Tamil stories ("Burden" by Prakash Sant, translated by Kamal Sanyal, "Pabi Maina" by Gurbaksh Singh, translated by Githa Sagar and "Our Teacher" by Sundara Ramaswamy, translated by Malati Mathur) focus on childhood and on a sense of loss but from completely differing perspectives. While the Telugu story ("The Flute Player" by K.N.Y. Patanjali, translated by K.P. Sharma) is a fantasy on fear, the Urdu story, ("The Will" by Ahmad Yusuf, translated by Nadeem Ahmad), tells the story of change in a traditional family in the manner of a *kissa*. Most of the stories are good reading and they ought to be so since Katha is meticulous about story-selection. But my personal favourite is the Gujarati story. Tautly wrought, well-compressed, full of 'mood' this is a story of the eternal triangle, of a woman in love with a married man. It is beautifully underwritten, from the point of view of the other woman whose mature age impels her to sad and inconclusive reflections about the predicament of human relationships. The story has been well-translated, as are the rest. The Bengali story is somewhat cliched and too distanced in its exploration of a failing middle-class marriage. The Tamil story meticulously written according to the grammar of the short story smacks of a deliberateness that robs one of the pleasure of reading. The Oriya and Urdu stories written in piquant and tongue-in-cheek styles make interesting reading. The Malayalam story deals with the predicament of a young man from Kerala in the Land of Plenty with no desire to strike it rich despite the concerned promptings of a sibling and surrenders himself to the admonishments delivered by his sole companion, a feline. The Marathi story which is full of local colour is about a boy living with grandparents, away from his mother, who yearns for his mother's touch.



The short story must lead the reader to a mental or emotional state which should be created not by recourse to verbiage but without it i.e. the reader should arrive at it unawares.

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Much hard work has evidently gone into the editing of the translations. Katha appears to prefer the usage of kinship terms in the languages, which doesn't present insurmountable problems to the readers—the course of the story explains the kinship and more often than not the terms relate to similar terms in other languages. But there are many other terms which do not have transparent meanings—like *Chelma* or *gur* which are not necessarily understood across the length and breadth of the country and which admit of simple English language equivalents. It is understandable when a translator is unwilling to substitute an awe-striking expression like 'Kaal baisakhi' as with 'Nor wester' but the explanatory terms that follow such expressions must be clear and bring out the intended effect. While I liked the typically Bengali 'Ish' spelled out as 'Isshhh' I was sore that 'Saappattu Raman' became 'Sapat Raman'.

Much hard work has evidently gone into the editing of the translations. Katha appears to prefer the usage of kinship terms in the languages, which doesn't present insurmountable problems to the reader.

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This was goodbye."

"The Debt" provides a counterpoint. The Indian protagonist, married to an American, is dead in an accident soon after the story begins, and in the ensuing bustle Anita is unable to terminate her pregnancy, which he was so happy about and she was not. The story follows her impulsive journey to India, to meet his old and dying father, to learn the lesson from him that everything is interconnected, nothing and no one is isolated, we all have our debts to pay.

A lesson also learnt by Seeta, in "The Lackadaisical Sweeper", who inspite of her parents' and society's conditioning that after marriage a woman's first duty is to her husband, is desperately unhappy at his betrayal of her friendship with the happy, generous and trusting Shiela, for his own pecuniary benefit. She keeps searching for that "something quite abstract, as yet obscure, but demanding nevertheless, to which she owed her duty first," and that search brings her to establish contact with the shadowy, eponymous seemingly misanthropic 'lackadaisical sweeper' of a street in Hong Kong, at the end of the story.

Exploitation and betrayal runs through most of these stories, sometimes comically sometimes tragically, and the *piece de resistance* is a story without any plot, characters, events or dialogue. It is a meditation by an unnamed first person narrator weaving the metaphysical conceit of Donne and Marvell which wittily and painstakingly compares a woman's body with a map. Ingeniously teasing out the connection between cartographical exploration and imperial exploitation, the story provides a compressed, complex, poetic evocation of colonialism and its aftermath and it is only near the end that the reader learns that the narrator-woman who is going to "draw this map all over again. Get to know myself in a way I choose, redefine myself, re-imagine myself", is India. Edward Said it was who elaborated Foucault's theory of power knowledge into a study of 'culture and imperialism'. No wonder then that this story "The Map", is "A tribute to Edward Said".

These fifteen stories, allegorical, ironic, quirky and unpredictable, playing with language and point of view, probingly subversive, sceptical yet never cynical, moral without being moralistic, "self-centric" and not necessarily "gynocentric", are a significant addition and an astringent corrective to Indian literature in English.

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Interface

A Dialogue

The Book Review Literary Trust and the United States Information Services jointly hosted a dialogue on the Interface between Publishing and Reviewing on 24 November 1997. "The Event", Ritu Menon who was in the Chair said, "heralded the activities of the winter session at the India International Centre."

The speakers were a mix of editors, authors, academics, reviewers and publishers. They were Ravi Dayal, Urvashi Butalia, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Indira Chandrasekhar, Geetha Dharmarajan, Rajiv Bhargava, Shobhana Bhattacharji and the guest speakers from the United States, Robert Silvers, Editor *The The New York Review of Books* and Rea Hederman publisher of Granta and *New York Review of Books*.

The discussions began with Henry Mendelsohn, Director Libraries, American Centre, introducing the American visitors.

THE FOUNDING OF THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

Robert Silvers began by saying that he seldom talked about their paper and recounted the story of how it was founded thirty years ago. He had worked as an editor most of his life, first in Paris where he was editor of the *Paris Review*. For him the work of an editor is essentially that of a critical admirer who dreams of bringing together writers of freshness and even geniuses, with the audience they deserve. In the early 1960s he asked one of the critics he admired most—Elizabeth Hartwick to write for him in *Harpers* on the state of book-reviewing in America and she wrote that reviewing, particularly in the dominant *New York Times* had become listless, perfunctory, mediocre and lacking in spirit. Silvers made enquires about the state of book-reviews, he was laughed at, told by people that unless he could find a millionaire who was willing to lose a lot of money, there would never be a large enough audience for serious book-reviewing. His life changed in 1963 when there was a long and bitter strike at *The New York Times*, his friend Jason Epstein, publisher of Pan-House rang him up and told him that this was the only time when he could start a book-review journal without capital, without a penny, because the publishers were going mad, they were going crazy, they were desperate, they didn't care, they were publishing books which were coming out without reviews, so any publication that could present itself as publishing reviews would immediately receive advertisements. So Jason and his wife Barbara, Elizabeth Hartwick and Robert Lowe took leave of absence, set to work to create their own paper. They asked themselves which of the writers in the English speaking world they admired the most and would like to read on the books just being published even if they had never or hardly ever written a book-review. As it happened some of the most prominent writers in America were willing to drop whatever they were doing and write reviews for no payment in a very short time as they all felt a new paper was needed and that critical consideration of books was a high and neglected cause. So, within weeks they received reviews by writers like W.H. Auden, MacCarthy, Norman Mailer and Susan Sontag and historians, economists, scientists and poets. While editing these articles Barbara Epstein and Silvers went around to publishers with their growing list of contributors and practically every publisher took an advertisement. They then found a printer and a sympathetic Bank that agreed to back the printing of the first issue of 50,000 copies which sold out. They had over a thousand letters asking them to go on and after that beginning they had very little trouble selling stock to a very small group of willing well-to-do people, while keeping control to themselves. As long as they could keep going and make a small profit, made enough to live on, they could do literally what they wanted, no owner, no foundation, no government, no one could fire them or pressure them as long as they paid the bills. Miraculously 25 years later, Rea Hederman, acquir ownership of the paper promising the same freedom they always had.

EDITORIAL CONTENT

Rea Hederman had this to say about editorial content: "I think it is a rat precious thing. But too often, it is subjugated to the whims of the busin department, which I represent, the editorial expenditure being discretion rather than necessary often because the tendency is as soon as a magazine beg to have problems financially, to go in and begin to cut the expenditure of editorial department and say we need to pay contributors less, we need to do ot things. It is an easy place to make cuts but I believe that it is the last place that budget cuts should be placed. It takes years to develop the editorial quality publication and to develop a publication to the point where it has a wi discerning audience that understands, appreciates and wants regularly to read magazine. Again, I think that is the key point, that it is much easier to kee subscriber than to go and find a new one and it is the quality that attracts read to publications. I believe this reading audience is smarter and more percept than they are given credit for. And, I further believe that this audience can ens and abandon rapidly any publication that begins to act dishonestly by reduc the quality of the editorial content for the sole reason of turning a higher profit."

Silvers had earlier opined that in publishing cultural criticism, whatever form of legal situation, defacto control by editors who conceive the aims and intellectual textures of the journal is an immeasurably precious asset, central to work itself. Some of the most interesting writers in the world had been willing collaborate with them. For one thing, they found that the *Review* was being re and talked about by the people they knew, that they are reaching an audience constellation of audiences which was characterized by willingness to consi writing that was probing and challenging a conventional language, a convention opinion and was willing to examine critically a wide variety of ideas. Ar secondly, some of these readers were made to feel that the form of the book-revie itself had opened up in the paper.

Barbara and he started from the premise that writing and the review its should not be merely competent, informative and informed, but felt that in texture, its imaginativeness the writing they published should have its own bit quality. They believed that literary sensibility could contribute perceptions th were often lacking in the prose of conventional academics and journalists, and th is why over the years had some of the novelists and poets whom they admired t most, not only to review books about literature, but to go out and observe t world, discuss central and social issues. A poet who is now the Oxford Profess of Poetry, went to Ethiopia to write about the famine there and to the Philippine he has become a regular columnist, and writes on everything from Rwanda to t history of Berlin to the marketing of the British monarchy. And, somethin comparable takes place when brilliant students of society and history are asked t consider the work of writers and poets. For example in 1997 the economi Amartya Sen wrote a long, controversial reflection for *The New York Review of Boo* (NYRB henceforth) under 'life and ideas' about Rabindra Nath Tagore, so it wa when the anthropologist Professor Gibbs, one of the great experts on Islam, wro from Lebanon.

In any case, they soon realized the extraordinary possibilities that they ha opened up by starting a book-review journal. Of the 15,000 odd books that the receive every year for reviews, there are only a small number of outstandi books. Most are highly technical or arkane on almost everything from bicycling bio-degradation. But these subjects could be of intense, intellectual interest whe considered with clarity by an original mind. Some years ago, when the fiction bes seller list seemed at its bleakest, its most sketchy, its most boring and dreary wit its gothic novels, sagas of pioneer families and super rich Texan Valley, just at thi moment Gore Vidal undertook to write on the entire list of these books and on eac and every book he analysed the different and recurrent paradigms—socia paradigm and sexual paradigm and sentimentality and suspense on which thes books depended. In much the same way a Harvard biologist wrote with gre instructiveness on historical and scientific forces and super-popular novels suc as Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*.

So whether it was physics, biology, history, anthropology, the books they wer considering were often locked apart from one another, kept themselves in com partments by their special language written by experts for experts or for overlap ping fields experts as in the current controversy between neurologists and philosophers with the question of consciousness or about geneticism evolution ary psychology. Silvers and Epstein saw their work as breaking down the wall between these compartments by insisting on clarity of language.

So, without any particular calculation, they found they are combining into

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larger audience, different kinds of readers from many different specialities, many different interests, all over the world, who seemed to see themselves as somewhat grudging, half-willing members of a contentious family. "In every issue of the *Review* the somewhat helter-skelter combination is represented in some form, you usually see the *Review* having to do with a work of art or music, there is a review of a book of science or economics, at least one review of a novel, a book of poetry, you see clustered together four reviews and a piece on several books sometimes as many as ten books. For example, there might be ten books on Reagan, ten books on Yugoslavia and you may find an analysis of the state, or on an entire field of enquiry, such as Freudian psycho-analysis. There are writers who present ideas of interest to the most advanced thinkers in those fields, and also cater to people in the middle or those who know nothing about the subject—perhaps most visibly of all, critical discussion of contemporary political ideas and political issues whether on the tactics of the administration or the effects of globalisation on American domestic economics."

DEBATES

Silvers said, no serious journal or book can remain aloof from deeply controversial issues. There is no safe, no apolitical place from which to publish a book review. "We published very different views on Vietnam by such experts as Fairbank, or an ardent diplomat as Gorge Kenin, . . . as well as radical critics such as Chomsky, they all were in one way or another apalled by the futility and the destruction and cruelty of the war and were apologetic. But we took no single doctrinnaire political line and as the north Vietnamese took over the south my friend called my attention to a long report published in France setting out in detail the repression of the population that he had observed in Saigon, the way books were burned, people jailed, the reporting to camps, we published it. There was an outcry from our readers who had not only come to think of the *Review* as outspoken about the war, but had come to see the north-Vietnamese as the victims. So, subscriptions were cancelled and if there is no such outcry from time to time, in publishing a paper, we feel that you probably don't have an intellectual journal worth the name."

Their general inclination had been from the first, to try to take the side of people of groups who had been suffering from state power, the people who have been bullied or harassed, censored, jailed, tortured, killed, disappeared for their opinions, affiliations and preferences. From the early 60s when the word humanright was little known, they found themselves trying to publish such views about every sort of regime, Left and Right, centrist, they published accounts of poets torture under the Shah, and of the Bahai philosopher's torture under the Ayatollahs. In both its articles and its letters corner, the *Review* has become a kind of an international billboard of appeals from and on behalf of otherwise silenced voices. They received around a thousand requests a year from people in beleagured countries and positions for some kind of a public examination about their situation.

Academic and political judgements present themselves in highly dogmatic and partisan forms. Now this has been the case with the charged debates in the U.S. over such American culture questions as deconstruction, multi-culturalism and these questions have occupied the NYRB for many years. In the early '60s when NYRB was started, there were no more than 6 per cent of all students who were black; most of them went to less than first rate colleges and some of the best excluded women altogether. During the last nearly thirty-four/five years now, there has been a growth of a college system in which more than twenty per cent were non-white and 55 per cent women, at the same time there have erupted the most bitter controversies about the curriculum and the distribution of academic power. There were intense complaints in the U.S. that the culture of Afro-Americans, the Hispanics, the concerns of women have been neglected for the writings and standards of white males have been dominant. The NYRB published many hundreds of thousands of words. Silvers thought that they involve the often concealed contest of an intellectual power that a book review and any interaction should confront.

For example, the power to have students read texts that reflect a particular ethnic experience or a political or social perspective while some of the new and previously neglected texts have strong claims to be part of the curriculum, have reflected in the desire to find topical work that would interest students brought up on television, who have very little interest in serious literature, or serious thinking. In reviewing these books or on these questions the contributors took a variety of positions, but they all insisted that what was at stake is not simply a given list of books or writings but the way those textswere taught. Contributors disagreed with writers who saw the great works of the tradition as repositories of timeless values. Fredrick Crews forcefully expressed the views that characterised the NYRB pages when he challenged what he called the transfusion model of education, a model by which the stored wisdom of the past classics is considered as a kind of plasma that would drip beneficially into one's veins. Professor Crews wrote that what was wanted was not reverence but clean debates over classics and modern texts that are in fact themselves often quite fiercely opposed to one another—not timeless values but historical consciousness and self-reflection and criticism.

The NYRB published an account of how in the State University of New York an English instructor desperately trying to interest his class in what it means to write with some intensity, compared the writer's involvement with his subject, with the excitement of sexual passion. Some young women decided that this analogy was offensive to them and they lodged a harassment complaint against him. He was told he could avoid a formal hearing before a big group of students and teachers if he signed a confession and was willing to submit to therapy and when he refused was found guilty in a hearing before a board appointed by the women administrators who had encouraged these young women to make the complaints. He was suspended for a year without pay. A *New York Times* reporter who was working on a book on academic practices wrote at length about what happened. Ultimately, the man won his case against the university in the state court. The contributing editor of the NYRB while reviewing the book agreed with the author that the treatment of the Professor was unfair and that the categories of race, ethnicity and gender and sexual orientation can be deeply suspect as accounts of identity, that the self-conception they teach the students when they are presented in a monolithic form can be deeply pernicious, they can be used to sponsor as an interest group politics that is fundamentally inimical to the notion of the common "I". He pointed to the dangers of the speech codes that can lead to the abandonment of the principles of free expression. The censor, Lukeman wrote, always rings twice. At the same time, however, he insisted with much force—something that means a great deal to editors—in defence of these principles of free expression, a minority opinion must be brought about by meticulously collected accounts of violation, which must have an imaginative sense of why people feel offended. He found the book under review wanting in several instances that he explained in detail and concluded that the author accusing multi-culturalists of distortion, exaggeration and suppression of evidence had resorted to some of the same methods himself. Naturally, the indignant author responded with thousands of words in defence. It is, Silvers felt, in the close and inevitably contentious examination of rhetoric and evidence about such questions, an openness to debate over them, openness to criticism about their own reviews, that the responsibility of a book review editor lies and in trying to meet that responsibility there is no way to avoid opinions that are highly critical, irreverent, skeptical, irascible, outspoken, against the grain and hardly correct.

Shobhana Bhattacharji talking about the three Indian review journals in English said that they are essentially liberal. "The English newspapers and journals that carry reviews are also, on the whole, liberal though they tend to shade off into the extreme Right. Unfortunately such liberalism seems to imply scholarly interest in books and ideas cut off from events that surround us. A detached, clinical assessment of a book is especially unwelcome at this time because the political Right and Left and the entire political spectrum seem to be using the same rhetoric but not chasing the same goals. Both lots are trying to tap the thoughtful and persuadable reader and it requires an astute perception to see the difference between them. If the liberal review journals are to be of any use in persuading readers away from Hitler's progeny they need to be less academically austere, less detached and relate the rhetoric of what they review and how they review to its social effects. This is not a time for sweetness and light. In the early 19th century

Whose Development:
An Ethnography of Aid

EMMA CREWE AND ELIZABETH HARRISON

This book is on ethnography of development in practice. It builds on recent work in the anthropology of development in its examination of the evolution and persistence of a number of key ideas about gender, technology and race. It explores how these are rooted in both material practices and ideologies, notably the Enlightenment and colonialism, but goes beyond previous studies which have tended to focus mainly on the apparently monolithic power of the developers.

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in England an ideological war was in full spate and the reviewers supportive. Our condition is not very different. So, lets take off those academic gloves or blinkers or whatever and join the fight."

Ritu Menon interjected to say that these comments directed the people in the room to think about some of the very important issues that confronted them, whether they are reviewers or publishers or writers and that was, how does a book-reviewing journal play the role of interlocutor? And if it is going to play the role of an intellectual journal, how was it to be done? It also raised questions about centre and periphery, who was the opinion maker, who were the makers of the ideas and where were these ideas and their responses generated?

HISTORY OF INDIAN PUBLISHING

Ravi Dayal briefly recounted the history of Indian publishing in the past fifty years. He began by saying "no one quite knows how many publishers of books there are in India, but estimates place the number at around twelve thousand, they are a mixed lot, not only because of the languages they publish in and the number of titles produced, but also in the range of activities. Apart from the private publishers there are about a thousand government or semi-government institutions that mushroomed largely in the first two decades of independence. They not only make official reports available and the sort of government material produced anywhere in the world but have made forays into general publishing and over the decades established a near monopoly of text book publishing with a vast network of states and schools. Together, these government institutions consume about 70 per cent of the paper available in India for books and form the largest publishing conglomerate in the country. Their produce is undistinguished and their functioning lazy and they have done little to add to the stature of Indian publishing.

"Such vibrance and variety of literature that exists in Indian publishing today brings it mostly from the exertion of private publishers even though they have been largely excluded from servicing the capacious school-markets which has nourished publishing elsewhere. With the 16 major Indian languages accounting for the rest of the 50 per cent in varying degrees, much of the publishing in the Indian languages has been mostly of poetry and fiction with comparatively little scholarly and reference material coming from them, English language publishing has been primarily educational and scholarly. But over the past fifty years or so the range of general books and creative writing in English language has grown and improved very substantially. Publishers are, of course, habitual grumblers about rising costs and the state of the market, but it seems clear that publishing has come of age in post independence India and should prosper further as literacy spreads further and the national economy grows.

"In 1947, publishers like everyone else in the country were confronted by a dauntingly harsh environment. The country was in turmoil after partition, of its 350 million inhabitants only 17 per cent were literate and they were scattered over a vast area, further fractured into many language groups. The freedom movement generated a good deal of political writing and several distinguished scholars had made pathbreaking contributions. Bengal had garnered a rich crop of creative writers and all the regions of the country had been stirred to various degree by the new intellectual and literary movements that helped by moulding Indian minds. But English language publishing played a seminal and catalytic role in the spread and development of ideas in India since 1947 predominated by three British publishing houses—the OUP founded in 1912 in India, MacMillan founded in 1903, Longman's founded in 1906 who concentrated on importing books from abroad and producing books for the colonial education system but also greatly encouraging Indian scholarship and thought. OUP India, in particular, developed over the years a lively but a small general list and in Masani's *Our India* and Jim Corbett's books it had some best sellers in the 1940s. Generally, however, sales were slow and do not appear to have encouraged major investments in areas other than text books.

"By the mid '60s it was evident that the infrastructure of India's intellectual life, was not only considerably larger, but more active than in 1947. The level of academic writing and publishing witnessed a seachange around then. The intellectual seeding that occurred through the major universities after '47 nourished the general level of debate and performance in innumerable areas, including creative writing. It has also provided a receptive audience for books, particularly for those written by Indians, that has led to a lively interaction between academic disciplines and writers in general. Fifty years ago, most of the ideas discussed, seemed to originate in Britain and sometimes, in America or Europe. What with these democratic institutions and boisterous debate, India remains exuberantly open to ideas and views from everywhere, liberal flow of books from abroad has always been encouraged.

"In the immediate aftermath of independence, most Indians thought, probably that it was right for English to be removed from the country, innumerable strategies were devised to encourage the use of Indian languages and starve out English. Publishing slumped, as a consequence, that year. However, English not only survived, but its use dramatically increased from the '60s onwards. English is the mother tongue of a mere hundred and twenty-five thousand, but the conservative estimate, based on student enrollment and employment statistics indicates that perhaps 80 million Indians know and use functional English. There have been no head counts of English-knowers in India unlike with the Indian languages, 80 millions may perhaps be startling but it is fairly correct.

"Over the past fifty years publishing has been shaped by and reflects all these developments. It has been an exciting time for those connected with the making of books and it has been associated with the spread of new ideas and writing whether it is editors or business people. It must be recognized that despite all the encouraging trends, India's publishers have usually had to function in an exceedingly difficult environment and in the face of heavy odds. The economy may have grown but in our sphere it hasn't grown fast enough and then we have had to live with all manners of scarcities. The English-knowing reader, the backbone of the market, is still scattered over a very wide area and difficult to reach, in the absence of good bookshops in all but the larger cities. If the material condition of life in India improves in the coming decades then forty per cent of the population will surely be drawn into the net of literacy at some stage. Publishers have much to look forward to when this comes to pass.

"Thirty-six years ago when I started off in publishing, most of the books reviewed in our papers were published abroad, neither the reviews nor the books seemed terribly relevant and the review pages generally seemed somewhat haphazard. There were of course, some notable exceptions such as Shyamlal of the *Times of India* and some earnest Indian language journals, but generally for serious discussion of ideas we looked to journals originating outside India. This no doubt, reflected the output of ideas here, but the overall scene seemed derivative. With a widening base of the educational system the vast numbers of authors in India over the past few decades, at least, the quality of reviewing too has improved noticeably with papers like *The Book Review* providing a fine forum for an exchange and evaluation of ideas. As a publisher I find reviews essential for the books I publish more useful than a general mailing. Widespread reviewing and wide-spread literary gossip backed by presence in book-shops are the best ways of getting books off the ground."

TEXT BOOKS AND BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Shobhana Bhattacharji felt that children and young adults are the two other groups who should be important to all those who want to sell books. "They are going to be the market and more importantly the repository of ideas." She said they were not only ignored in the seminars, they are generally ignored in the choice of books to be reviewed and in the language of reviews. For instance, why are text books not reviewed when they are probably the largest selling books in India? "Children, in my experience, devour books of all kinds like vaccum cleaners, even classics, when they know about them. From a recent survey of book-shops we learnt that even parents who haven't read them tout the classics and book-shops sell them. I think it would be good to review them as sales strategy as well as to create new readers. I believe young adults are looking for important ideals and direction. Review articles can provide the required direction."

"Good editors allow reviewers to read upon the subject and plenty of words to set out issues. Personally, my favourite reviewers are those who teach me about a subject and give me an academic, political or whatever stand on it. The blind leading the blind approach, this in E.P. Thompson's wonderful phrase—'the bland leading the bland approach' to reviewing is boring and worthless. If I wouldn't buy a book presented in this way why should I presume that the young adult will? ' "Our mission is educational in the broadest sense" is how the U.S seminarist—Jack Brighton, put it (Seminar on book reviewing organized by Chandra Chari at the University of Urbana-Champaign, Illinois on 31 July 1997—report in *The Book Review*, October 1997). He placed his mission in the context of the economic and political calculus, by which making money is seen as the only legitimate role of publishing houses. Books that sell do not always push past the known and given, but it is these pushers who challenge the world and alter it, and if responsible reviewers promote such books how do publishers react to such promotion? Do they feel reviewers will be reviewers and leave it at that? Wouldn't a dialogue rather than dismissiveness help! However out of date this may sound I think those of us in the communication business, must take the social results of our writing and publishing seriously, especially in the face of the social and

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economic calculus mentioned earlier. As the seminarist already quoted has said, 'books that have ideas, information, education, perspective, enlightenment, relation require subsidies to publish and buy'. Perhaps we have to resurrect the idea of what is good for the nation and work together to push it through. I have, however, more than a nagging doubt about this notion that comes straight from early 19th century in England, when periodicals turned into review journals which dealt with issues in and around books. At that time, of course, seminars on reviewing were not held, because reviewers never doubted that they were forming opinions. With this ancestry for modern review journals we could ask whether we are simply interested in hanging on to a way of life that has no relevance any longer. But the fact is that we face not so much an informationglut but as a premium on mere information without any equivalent stress on analysing that information or its social purpose. It is a new positivism and far madder than it seemed to be at the end of the 19th century.

"The shrinking of space for reviews in the audio-visual media means that the taken for granted approach, not just to the style but to the contents of reviews won't do any more. The young adult is not the only reader the reviewers can address. The printed word is very valuable for a lot of people who have for the last few years felt butteressed into a corner by the T.V., a packaging rather than a content mode of academic and journalistic writing and a starvation of funds for the humanities in the universities. There is a need for genuine political and cultural insights, in other words public opinion has become an issue and although we could slide into despair by asking which public, we could also resort to some 19th century vigour and consider the role of intellectuals and the liberal middle class in leadership."

One thing Robert Silvers felt very strongly about was that while most books that were produced were text books and were for children, they existed in a kind of limbo and if they were not sufficiently reviewed may affect the lives of millions of children. The NYRB has from time to time reviewed some of these text books but it is never enough. The text books are kept in their own strange pasture and they are somehow unexamined and it is an enormous question because it is often a highly corrupt and a highly rigged quasi-racket—huge procurement by government offices of text books with public money from schools who are often producing work which is, subject to all sorts of pressures. In America, there are terrible pressures from state purchasing agents about political correctness, incorrectness etc. It is time that writers, editors and publishers took it as a central responsibility and asked themselves "what are these text books, who'll write them, how good are they, what kind of language do they use, what kind of picture of the world do they present, is that what we really want children to learn, are they at the level for young children to have their imagination gripped?"

THE ROLE OF THE EDITOR

In response to a query by Professor Desai, Silvers said that he believed that an editor should be intimidated by nothing and should respond as genuinely as he can using all his best intelligence to make the review as clear and as intelligible and as good as it can be within the range of the talents of the writers. Editors should not hesitate to intervene, just use their intelligence and sensibility and think whether this piece of writing is 'as strong, as clear, as interesting as it can possibly be,' realizing that it will never be as strong and as interesting as you would dream of. But trying to convey to the author how it might be improved often involves the most difficult battle or exchange with these writers.

The loneliness of all writing is something that we are all aware of—"The writer alone with a book, trying to make judgements, often going on too long, not knowing where to stop." Silvers said we all know how difficult it is to write any piece of literary work and people are often grateful for some advice. One should intervene as best one can.

ACADEMIC REVIEWING

Rajiv Bhargava asked: "What is it that the writer of an academic book expects from a book review? Now, there is a very simple and obvious answer to that question which is that the author expects that the book review will provide very simple information on what the book is about, will give a very brief summary and thesis of the book and perhaps raise one of these substantive issues which are part of the text. Now, I think that is a job that needs to be done but best left to the publisher. But what the author is not looking for is the worst possible interpretation and arguments about his book, which is then knocked down which happens quite regularly. What the author is looking for is the best possible interpretation Perhaps, interpretation that he also only partly recognizes as his own but which he will be very happy to own up as his own. How is that going to happen? The conditions under which that will happen—one is that people must be reasonable, they should be openminded, they should be willing to listen to and respond to evidence, argument and they should be willing to listen to each converse with the other. The second is part of this condition of being reasonable, that they should be able to practice a very simple, familiar principle—enter the conceptual world of the author, feel things from his perspective, to begin with they should be able to grasp what he is trying to do in the book and very often this can be done by simply looking at the introduction. I'm saying this because this is something which an author, a reviewer of my book just didn't do, he probably didn't even look at the introduction, where I had said very clearly this is not a history of ideas, this is a book on methodological individualism, and I said that I'm going to talk about methodological individualism and there are very important links between methodological individualism and political and moral individualism but these links, these very important links maybe a very interesting topic for another book, but these are not going to be discussed in my book. I also said very clearly that although there are some very interesting people who are associated with methodological individualism, I'm not going to discuss them as this is an analytical treatment so I'm not going to discuss each of the authors individually. But it is precisely these I was criticised for. I was told that this book should be ahistorical, the views of each author should be taken more seriously and very important links with moral and political individualism have not been explored and so on and so forth. So, I think it is very important for any book reviewer to just to be able to grasp what exactly the author is about. Well, what can be done to generate this culture? I think that is a much larger question that takes us beyond the world of books and onto very interesting issues about how we must restructure our public culture and public experience."

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Rea Hederman said that "there is no mass market for the readers of the *New York Review*. We cannot send a mailing order the same way as the *Time* and *Newsweek* can and expect any percentage of the total American market to respond. We have to look very carefully at who, we think, might be a potential reader of the *New York Review* and how we can go and find them. The most effective way that we have is through direct mail, with subscribers lists from other American magazines. Our best sales is through good quality bookshops and good news stands. We send them free issues of the *New York Review* and ask them if they would not like to buy a certain number of copies directly from us, rather than go into it through a distributor. The third way that we do it is to exchange advertising—it is a sort of cross-fertilisation.

"In using direct mail for sales we are always looking for new ways to tell readers about our publication and the one effort that has been most successful for us is to basically give a free sample of our publications—like the anthology of selected pieces from the first 30 years of the *New York Review*. By having our own publication we can advertise to our own subscribers and not have to depend on distributors whom we found to be very unreliable.

"Another thing that we have just started using but which is turning out to be extremely effective for us is the internet. We have a website on the internet that is attracting a lot of traffic. We put up five or six pieces on our site, from our current issue of the *New York Review* and then we have a subscription information. We are finding that each month there are 70 people subscribing, just on the basis of the internet and these subscriptions are from all over the world, it totally eliminates distribution. You don't have to find the people, they find you."

AMERICAN PUBLISHER'S ENTRY INTO INDIA

When asked if American publishers are afraid to publish in India because of the pirating of their information Rea Hederman said, "I called a number of publishers before coming to India and talked to several lawyers in detail about intellectual property rights and everyone gave me exactly the same answer and that is that you can have a contract or licence and it is entirely enforceable, it is not a real problem for American publishers in India."

Urvashi Butalia began with the concern expressed by Henry Mendelsohn that American publishers were reluctant to publish in India because Indian publishers are suspected, by and large of, being pirates. Now, "this", she said, "coming from a country which is behind the World Trade Organization, which is trying to patent neem which has been our property for centuries, and which took the zero from us seems to be extremely strange. There are two kind of barriers or two kinds of problems we come up against when talking about publishing between two Continents and in this case, the Continents are clearly India and the United States. The first of these is an attitudinal barrier and that has to do with things like this—

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the perception that by and large, we are pirates. Now, we in Kali, we are a small publishing company, we publish a number of academic books, some of which get picked up in the United States by University presses and get put on courses and we routinely receive requests for photocopying these things for which we cannot be paid and they can be put into text books for students. Now, if that is not pirating, that is not infringing copyrights, I don't know what is. We should acknowledge that this is a world-wide problem, that there isn't really a question of a high moral ground that one country can occupy in relation to another and it is quite true that India is a signatory to the copyright convention and by and large, ethical publishers in India, as anywhere else in the world stick by that, unethical ones in India as anywhere else in the world don't. So, that is one of the attitudinal problems we face in relation to this. The others are some of the things Ravi talked about—he talked about 52 per cent literacy in this country, now, with 52 per cent literacy which is not enough clearly in Indian terms but if you look at it in terms of numbers of aliterate we are talking about 400/450 million people which is not small, so we are not an illiterate country generating an illiterate literature but we are a country which is actually generating several fairly complex, fairly rich literatures. Last week there was a big French publisher here who talked about the conditions that make it interesting and possible for different literatures to enter different countries and one of the things he said was that there has to be a receptivity, there has to be an openness, there has to be an understanding, a desire to know the literature of another country and that I think is very closely connected with things which are non-literary, that is connected with things like economics, things like histories that countries have with politics and so on. It is no surprise, really, that in the United States there is interest in the literatures of Latin America, there is interest in the literature of Vietnam, interest in holocaust literature, there is interest in literature of Taiwan now mainland China as well, I mean, it comes as no surprise either that there is interest in England in the literature of India and so on. But, of course, how can a country know the literature of another country except through a language in common?

"Ian Jack did an issue of *Granta* on India some months ago; several of the writers who figured in that have said often that they have had so much exposure from that one issue which has sold hundred thousand copies all over the world, they are all writers who write in English and this has actually given them an access that they did not earlier have. So, it is frightening the kind of access English has and the kind of influence it has, but there it is. I think because we are a Third World country, the general perception is that perhaps things coming out of here, whether in English or otherwise are not quite upto the mark or not quite good enough. So, that is another sort of attitudinal barrier that we face. In fact, when I was thinking about this, I was thinking that the only thing that travels outside of India, easily without prejudice is Indian food and that is because, (a) it is not attached to a language and (b) it carries with it an immediate adaptibility to the conditions and tastes of any other country. It is not only books that don't get out, it is also all kinds of other products like cars that don't get out and of course, it doesn't happen the other way round."

To Indira Chandrashekhar there was no one publishing scene in India. "There are many many publishers who represent, often different contradictory contexts. I'm not only talking about size here or revenues but even in terms of the focus, the specialisation, the reason for which you are in publishing to begin with, and, partly, it has to do with the history of publishing in India.

"Efficiency and inefficiency is not marked by your borders, I mean, India publishers are not necessarily more inefficient or tardy or less quality conscious my experience in co-publishing has been that I have waited for replies for decisions to be made, without interest ever waning, in the project, for, well, more than two years in one instance, in a book that I obviously decided to go ahead and publish because I can't wait for a publisher abroad to respond before I can go ahead with my plans and after two years there is a response which is positive which is affirmative, 'Yes, we would like to take so many copies of your book Please sell us rights, let's get into the thing,' and then, again, there is a lull of a year or so. I don't know whether this is the general case. For small publishers these are experiences which only reinforce one's resolve to continue in whatever manner one can. There are no generalisations in this business or in this industry, if you can call it that and one has to feel one's way forward with instinct very often and possibly with the resolve to just go ahead and something will come of it at some point.

"We find a number of American publishing houses and publishers from other parts of the world entering the Indian market in a very big way. Presently Scholastic books has entered the Indian market. They are a huge presence just in terms of the number of titles and the subsidised prices that they are able to sell their books in the Indian market. They are good books, they are well produced, why shouldn't an Indian child not buy a Scholastic book rather than a book published by an Indian publisher except in terms of the content or whatever. So, these are big presences that we have to come to terms with, live, with I think, harmoniously find our own little places."

TRANSLATION OF INDIAN FICTION IN ENGLISH

"While everybody knows and has been discussing a very great upsurge of English novels emerging from India, one aspect that has been less often talked about and not talked about at all, today, is another phenomenon that is also acquiring a boom-status within the country and that is translation of Indian fiction in English," Dr. Meenakshi Mukherji said. "What we now witness is the emergence of a systematic and promotional production by institutions and established publishing houses who carefully select the text to be translated, control the quality and texture of the translation, provide a suitable context for each book, introductions translator's prefaces and notes. The total number of Indian fictional texts available in English is not negligible today although it is only the tip of the iceberg when compared to what remains untranslated, numerically, it is comparable to Indian novels written in English which too used to be a trickle at one time, but in the last two decades have become a virtual flood. Thus, we have two numerically comparable sets—Indian novels written in English and Indian novels translated into English, and what I want to ask you about is the blatant asymmetry in the reception of the two texts. The writers who write in English, at least, the best of them attain worldwide visibility, attract international media attention, get translated into several European languages. Writers like Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy, Mukul Keshavan and quite a few others are reviewed and interviewed widely, invited to distant corners of the world to give readings, but at the same time, not many outside the borders of India have heard the names of Ismat Chugtai, Gopinath Mohanty, Shivram Karanth or Shisherendu Mukhopadhyay, whose work is in Urdu, Oriya, Kannada and Bangla respectively. Language cannot be cited as a barrier in this case to accessibility because English translation of at least one novel by each author is available fairly easily for anyone who would care to look for them.

"But who should care to look for them and why? Books do not exist in the abstract realm of aesthetic values. People read books either because the desire to read specific text is created through discussion in the media, which are then seductively marketed like any other consumer product; alternatively they are read if they are put on reading lists in school/college courses. I have personally been involved in many debates and I know there is tremendous resistance to putting translated texts on courses here. Hypothetically, an English translation, say Bhalachandra Nemade's novel *Ghosla* or O.V. Vijayan's *Legend of Khasak* published by Penguin and MacMillan become available not only to Indians who do not know Marathi or Malayalam but also to readers in Australia, Canada, USA or England. How many actually read them is, however, another matter.

For one thing, hardly any of these translated texts are ever reviewed abroad and reviewing is one way books get known and perhaps the only way when the publishers do not have promotional budgets which is often the case with Indian

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publishers and Indian publishers are the ones who bring out these books. The question to ask here, and I do not know whether the publishing professionals here can answer my question—why do the publishing houses in London/New York/ San Fransisco never touch these books, but publish and promote Indian novels originally written in English, not always only the best but sometimes second rate ones also? And, the same publishers have no difficulty in publishing and selling translations from Latin America, Czechoslovakia, or from other parts of the world and securing worldwide media coverage for them.

"Some of you will recall that in 1989 Timothy Brenen proposed and gave currency to a new category of writers called the Third World Cosmopolitans, who are globally visible, who the *New York Review of Books* and *Times Literary Supplement* hail as the interpreters and authentic voices of the Third World. According to Brenen this group included Garcia Marquez, Dereck Walcott, Salman Rushdie and Bharati Mukherji and a few others. These writers emerge from and often write about a non-western culture, but their mastery over the current idiom of the metropolitan meta-language of narrative, ensures them a favourable reception in the western world where the centres of publication and evaluation are located. Significantly, even though this list includes Latin American writers who have been translated into English, Indians, in order to belong to this club must write in English, to begin with. There is a tacit erasure of the diversity of India, here the writers in English, consciously or unconsciously present an India which is accessible to even those who have no direct experience of living here. The Hindi or Tamil writer evidently has a much more specific and a focussed audience. This may be one reason for the disinterest in these novels outside the country. But why the same logic would not apply in the case of novels from Argentina, Chile or Columbia is not very clear to me.

"The very few Indian writers who are read abroad, either academically or—I think mostly in academic courses, they get a hearing through the mediation of scholars based in USA. Gayatri Spivak's story about translation of Mahashveta Devi's novel is a case in point. She has been writing for many years, she has been available in Indian translations before, but until somebody with a great academic standing in USA decided to translate and to introduce her, she was not known outside India. Similarly, I think is the case with Ananthamurthi and the translation of his book *Samskara* by A.K. Ramanujan, he has other novels which to me are far more exciting and complex, gets prescribed outside India and because it is prescribed outside India, I think, after a time-lag we are also thinking of doing it here. At the moment, I believe the Feminist Press in the US is publishing a collection of short stories by Lalitambika Antarjanam, a Malayalam writer, but they have to do it with an introduction by Meena Alexander, who is based in New York and has a certain reputation as a poet in the USA, she knows the region from where this writer comes, but she has no literary knowledge of the language from which these are being translated.

"To mark the fiftieth year of independence, several journals outside India have brought out literary issues, judging by the contents of which one would think that in India literature is written only in one language and that is English. How does one explain this ignorance wilful or otherwise, about the ferment of literary activity in a dozen or more vibrant languages in the country? The new generation of English writers who are being exposed to the world, partly because some of them happen to be excellent, but also because they write in English and are published abroad. But they do not always represent the diversity and heterogenity of the writing scene in India. "

Geetha Dharmarajan then said that while "we have always been very happy to take what has come from outside and know the bylanes and pathways of Dickens's England, we don't even know what Chandni Chowk looks like while living in India. So, I think, what is really needed here, is a pride in ourselves, more pride in what we have, what we can translate for ourselves because we have some great literature and fantastic writers."

U.I.

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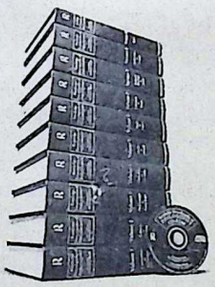

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More Promising than Fulfilling

Arundhati Deosthale

KHATUL

Manjul Bhagat

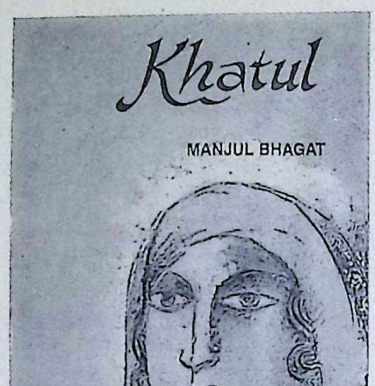
National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 112, Rs. 60.00

When Manjul Bhagat who has earlier given us enjoyable works like *Anaro* and *Toota Hua Indradhanush* takes up a new canvas, that of a beautiful young girl's uprootedness and exile from her strife-torn home state i.e. Afghanistan the expectations are naturally high—Anne Frank like situation? One wonders. But to all those looking for a sensitive probe into wounded psyche, the book comes as a big letdown.

The whole world has witnessed in shock and grief what Afghanistan has been through in the last few years. The brutally rocked socio-political situation, unremitting anarchy caused by change of regimes and Russian intervention, and spurts of gory violence have compelled millions of innocent men and women to flee the country and seek refuge elsewhere. India, the neighbouring country with its accommodative democracy has been the choice of a large influx of Afghani refugees who have heart-rending tales to tell. Against such a backdrop when a creative writer addresses the issue of what it is like for a young girl to be a fugitive in an alien country facing an uncertain future, a whole gamut of possibilities is thrown open.

In fact *Khatul* with is superfluous treatment of the subject trivializes the issue. Khatul, the central character of the novelette despite the harrowing situation that she is placed in, remains a stranger to her readers, failing to evoke their sympathy. The laboured narrative meandering through trivialities and details doesn't pick up and the somewhat abrupt termination comes as though the author herself is bored with the purposeless journey and has decided to call it a day. Some women writers somehow don't seem to do away with their preoccupation with food and festivities, cloths and accessories, relations and pets.

The author's confusion about her approach to the theme becomes evident from the blurb itself. "Aching with memories, yearning for a family and home she (Khatul) empathizes with Zari Khanum's misery feeling stronger of the two and more capable of dealing



with the blows of life as in her own words, she has seen war, whereas poor Zari has gone through the deception and duplicity of a single Khan—her husband. The Tormentor is always faceless, with no nationality, a 'soul less' creature inflicting senseless *pain* upon its victims unaware of himself as its possible next prey".

Is not there a major self-contradiction in the lines quoted here? The "Tormentor" in neither of the cases i.e. Khatul and Zari, is 'faceless' and 'without nationality'. This also leads to another question about Manjul Bhagat's choice of language namely English with which she appears uncomfortable. Examples:

"Her fair face was flushed with happiness and the Sun shone on it in an e[xq]uisite blend of silver and gold" (p. 1[4]

"Auntie, except for death nothi[ng] can sunder them apart from their trib[e] Khatul once remarked. While pronou[n]cing this verdict the contours of Khatu[l]'s visage suddenly wintered like t[he] changing season. Her eyes had beco[me] clouded, receding into the past" (p. 1[5]

Be this original or translated fr[om] Hindi, the language is awkward.

The other three stories in the bo[ok] 'Steps', 'Nisha' and 'Bebeji' form t[he] better part of the book. When Manj[ul] Bhagat is on her homeground, talki[ng] about the typical Indian middle cl[ass] people the stories come alive desp[ite] the hampered style. Both 'Nisha' a[nd] 'Bebeji' confront their respective pro[b]lems in the immediate relationship[s] with sound emotional logic. Bebeji [is] an old woman who is deserted by h[er] sons to cope with life all by herself. S[he] finds herself a son in Nikka Tandoo[r]wala and at an appropriate mome[nt] makes her choice clear to her biologic[al] son who has all along been taking h[er] for granted. 'Nisha' too displays exem[p]lary inner strength in fighting again[st] several odds that her typical conserv[a]tive middle class family tries to stall h[er] with. She breaks free quietly an[d] steadily to be herself, to be differen[t]. In all *Khatul* is more promising tha[n] fulfilling.

Arundhati Deosthale writes in an[d] translates from Marathi, English and Hin[di] and is presently working with Scholast[ic] India.

ABC Tumble Down D

Joya Banerji

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Learning a new language can be tricky at the best of times. Especially if you are between the ages of three and six and your parents are contemplating sending you to school to learn English. Yet it can be fun. Here's a clutch of books for children to prove how. Textbooks, supplementary readers, educational books. Books to sink milk teeth into. Books that take children on what the publishers, Madhuban Educational Books, a division of Vikas, have chosen to call a "joyous voyage of discovery". A trifle excessive, perhaps—they may not be the entire voyage, but they certainly are the launching pad.

In the early years, when their vocabulary is being formed, children need books that are visually stimulating, primarily to generate and capture interest. The elements that matter in a picture word book are obviously pictures and words, how good the illustrations are and how well the words reflect a child's immediate neighbourhood as well as the changing social scenario. These two books seem adequate enough, although the quality of illustrations could have been better. As well as the quality of printing. Inspite of a few odd inclusions like daffodils an[d] sweetpeas in the flowers section and [a] fire station that looks like it belongs [in] a quaint German town instead of a[n] Indian one, it must be said that th[e] vegetable pages have lovely gree[n] parwals, tindas, laukis and okra, an[d] the "Things We See in Town" page ha[s] a Mother Dairy milk booth and a scoote[r] stand. Although "In the Hospital" w[e] meet male doctors and female nurses [in] the "Work people do "there is [a] dentist who is a 'lady'. The only othe[r] women doing any "work" are selling [a] vegetables or books. This may soun[d] like nit-picking, but it is well-know[n] that by the time children are seven o[r] eight, their world-view is well-estab[-] lished. Books like these contribute muc[h] to their view of the world and need t[o] be a wee bit more wary of stereotyping.

A lovely set of two colouring books [is] beautifully drawn by Anita Sen, baby [a]nimals and familiar fruit and vegeta[-]bles that would lighten up any nursery [or] school-child's life. And good value, too.

Large format activity books for three to five year olds, put together by Veen[a]

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Sharma and illustrated admirably by Girija Singh. Designed so that the child can progress from "the simple to the complex", there are pages and pages of alphabet, numbers, colours, shapes, opposites, rhymes (Hindi ones too, nice touch), pre-writing patterns, the family, the body, the home, matching shapes, sizes... whew! Activities guaranteed to hone the observation, visual discrimination, eye-hand coordination, sensory discrimination and environmental awareness of children, as the foreword promises, and to keep the little terrors quiet for a precious five minutes!

A brightly coloured, cheerful book of the alphabet, colours, shapes, numbers and rhymes with lovely illustrations by Girija Singh. This book could do with some Hindi rhymes.

A great hat-trick of activity books that describe a child's immediate environment—her home, school and town. Much the same concepts found here as in other books of this nature, with one difference. The sections aren't serially devoted to animals, then to family, then to school, etc. All the concepts are interleaved. Festivals intermingle with colours, leaves with sizes, birds with alphabets, fruits with shapes, and mazes with a few games and crosswords thrown in for good measure. Illustrations by Girija Singh, liven up the pages.

Book 2, the textbook, is well-balanced and properly thought out. The text is written to emphasize the dignity of labour, helping others, good neighbourliness, courtesy and manners, that all religions ought to be respected and that festivals mean fun and joy. Towards the end of the book the section on the earth and our environment draws the child's attention to the concepts of pollution and ecological balance and introduces the idea of "history". An excellent primer.

And now to the language of mathematics. Illustrated mathematics textbooks! Who'd have thought of it when we were young! But in the age of "learning is fun", illustrations work wonders—Girija Singh added value yet again. Concepts are explained simply via diagrams and pictures and thus are easily grasped. Starting from simple addition and subtraction in Book 1 and progressing to multiplication and division of fractions, decimals, area, volume, simple interest, speed-distance-time, profit and loss and geometry in Book 5, the textbooks cover much ground, as demanded by the new educational policy syllabus in mathematics. A first cursory glance through the books and parents will step back in horror at the amount their children have to learn. But these textbooks make learning relatively painless. My son loves his math textbook (Number Fun 4)—not only does it teach him about factors, HCF, LCM, fractions shapes and angles with very little effort on his part (or so it seems), but he can copy the pictures of grinning octopuses, smirking cats and zooming rockets on to cards and give them to his teachers and friends. Two birds, one stone, happiness all around.

A set of easy-to-read Hindi supplementary readers written for seven to ten year olds, the *Madhu Kalash* series is such a good idea. These honey pots of books are brimful of sweet, simple stories with morals, diary entries, tales of famous people, poems, one act plays, humourous Akbar-Birbal tales, folk tales, tales of courage, the marvels of science, incidents in history as well as stories culled from the *Panchatantra* (luckily not too many). And as if that were not enough to keep our fidgeting children spellbound, there are interesting exercises, *Khel Khel Mein* and *Seekho Aur Sikhao*, at the end of each chapter. All that remains is a gentle nudge from parents to encourage their children's interest in *Madhu Kalash*. Though with all the additional distractions from Cartoon Network, *Sweet Valley*, cricket matches and comics, I wonder at the rate of success.

To coin a mixed metaphor, you can take a child to a honey pot but you must keep your fingers crossed.

Joya Banerji is editor, Kali for Women.

Communication

When a reviewer cursorily leafs through a book, at places misreading it, and then misquotes from it to suit her statements, misinterpretations and misrepresentations, the result is what Radhika Chopra has done in her review of my book *Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South and South-east Asia* (TBR, March 1998)). In the process, she has clearly misled the readers of *The Book Review*. Hence this reminder.

Chopra faults rights in the beginning by substituting kinship for gender and thus reversing my argument. On page 1, I write: 'My objective is to highlight certain issues that have remained largely neglected. It is my hunch that gender studies (as an interdisciplinary field) often leave out a consideration of kinship (emphasis added), either because it is thought irrelevant or because it is viewed as an immutable given'. Chopra picks up part of the sentence and writes... 'because gender (emphasis added) has been "largely neglected... because it is thought irrelevant or because it is viewed as an immutable given'. She has been able to do this only by misquoting me.

As far as feminist anthropologists' writings on kinship and gender during the last few decades are concerned, she had only to turn to note 1 of chapter 1 and she would have found a number of relevant references which I have given. In the same note, I have also explained what had been lacking in the treatment of women in kinship studies in anthropology.

Unfortunately, Chopra has failed to grasp the import of much of the ethnographic data presented from the two regions and their interconnections. My chapter on 'Bodily Processes and Limitations on Women' deals with menarche, menstruation and consequent vulnerability of women, pregnancy, childbirth, parturition and ethno-reproductive beliefs '... which tells us about notions concerning the roles of the two sexes in procreation and provide the rationale and the justification for rights—or lack of rights—over children and in inheritance and succession' (p. 76). After writing about the implications of the metaphor of the seed and the field and much else, I mention the Philippines saying that, while I could not get much material on this area, the 'Philippines seem to give equal importance to father's and mother's blood; two kinds of fluids have to mingle for conception to occur... the recognition of both parents accords with the bilateral kinship system' (p. 79).

Logically, this chapter should have been read along with the chapters on 'Management of Female Sexuality' and the 'Seclusion of Women'. I do refer the readers to them at appropriate moments, but what Chopra does is to make selective use of the contents of even this chapter and state that I have said all that I had to say on menstruation in South and south-east Asia in the space of two pages. This is clear misrepresentation. In fact, the chapter begins with 'For Muslims the association of napak (impure) for menstrual and parturient blood has a religious basis. Menstruation and parturition are polluted states during which women are forbidden to pray, fast or touch the *Quran*. This basic belief is common throughout south and south-east Asia, but there are distinct differences between the two regions. The acknowledgement of menarche as coming of age, demanding special circumscription is more marked in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan' (p. 70).

This also explains Jeffrey's observation regarding the Pirzada women that they are forbidden during the period of pollution to carry on those activities that connect them with their husband's means of livelihood (as priests of Nizamuddin Dargah). Thus they are forbidden to sew curtains for the saint's tomb or prepare sweets for the pilgrims.

This brings me to the last point. Chopra perceives a contradiction between the symbolism of blossoming and the threatening nature of menstrual blood, which, according to her, has remained unexplored in the book. Obviously she has missed many points made in the chapter and in the book. In Blanchett's words relating to the village of Miyapur in Bangladesh, 'Menstruation is impure but, if properly contained, it is also auspicious as it symbolizes and announces in a positive way a woman's generative potential' (quoted on page 71). This ties up with what I have written about Hindu India, that 'in many Indian languages menstruation is likened to flowering or blossoming—the necessary stage before fruit can appear' (p. 75). One of the meanings of pushpa (flower, blossom) is 'menstrual flux' and pushpakal is 'time of the menses' (Lokbharati Pramanik Kosh). In Tamil, 'a girl is given a bath when she is flowering' (Uma Chakravarthy). One expression I often heard in Chhattisgarh was 'unless a girl flowers, how can she bear fruit?' For this reason, menarche or first menstruation, although associated with pollution, is considered an auspicious event (combining auspicious and impure elements, as in birth. See T.N. Madan 1987:65). It is celebrated in many regions, as I have mentioned in the chapter.

At the same time, since menstrual blood is polluting, it is threatening in as much as it makes a menstruating woman vulnerable to being attacked by spirits and ghosts. She also has to be careful in avoiding deities lest they are angered. There are many other prohibitions, which may have to be followed in order to avoid rendering pure objects impure.

Another major threat which begins at the onset of puberty involves the complex of the awakening of the post-pubertal girl's sexual impulse, her becoming specially attractive to the opposite sex and, most importantly, her biological maturity in as much as she acquires the capacity to become pregnant, a state which is difficult of repudiation. '. . .[The message is clear: the girl has become a sexual being. This calls for restrained behaviour on her part and for protection and vigilance by others' (p. 75–76) for there is a threat to her purity. As Chanana has mentioned, in many places the age of puberty tends to coincide with the withdrawal of girls from school. I hope this will make clear my statement on page 75 that 'Patriliny and caste combine to create a perception of menstrual blood as particularly threatening, as I discuss on the chapter on women's sexuality'.

Unfortunately, the reviewer has failed to capture the contrast between south and south-east Asia. I would also like to make it clear that within these regions I have chosen specific populations under different kinship systems and also following different religions. The book has its limitations, but they have escaped the reviewer for she got obsessed with what was not my major concern. Opinions and concerns can differ, but what I find objectionable is the unacademic and irresponsible manner in which the review has been written.

Leela Dube

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■ ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The Victoria Memorial Hall Calcutta: Conception, Collections, Conservation
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This volume presents the Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta, its architecture and the collections—as originally conceived by Lord Curzon who both initiated the project for the Memorial Hall and took a direct hand in its architectural design and the holdings. Besides being an outstanding monument of British India, it is arguably the most important example of colonial architecture, its collections including the finest in the world of paintings by European artists working in India between 1780 and 1830.
MARG Publications, 1998, pp. 160, price not mentioned.

■ BIOGRAPHY

Sabavala: Pilgrim, Exile, Sorcerer
Ranjit Hoskote
This is the definitive biography of Jahangir Sabavala by a leading critic and commentator on contemporary Indian art. Sabavala has had no patience with the fluctuations of fashion, ideology and political necessity. He has always stood apart from schools and movements. Some of the material incorporated here has never been published before.
Eminence Designs Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, 1998, pp. 184, price not mentioned.

■ ECONOMY

The Reserve Bank of India 1951–1967
G. Balachandran
This is the second volume of the history of the Reserve Bank of India, the first covering the period 1935–1951 having been published in 1970. The book covers the larger part of the first two decades after independence, when pioneering steps were taken to strengthen, develop, and diversify the country's economic and financial structure. This volume narrates not only the history of an important public financial institution in India in the process of change, but also sheds light on the country's economic development during these crucial years.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 1190, Rs. 1195.00

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This is an alarming exposé of the devastating consequences of economic globalization and a passionate message of hope. A searing indictment of an unjust international economic order, a devastating critique of the tyranny of the global economy with an arsenal of well argued alternatives to offer an empowering agenda for change.
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Working Mothers: Role Conflict and Adjustments
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Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India
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Closing the Sacred Line: Women's Search for Political Power
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Women of Midnapore in Indian Freedom Struggle
Rina Pal
Midnapore the land of revolt kept close contact with the Indian National Congress. From the confidential political report of the British Government we know that Midnapore has been the scene of the principal Congress activities.
Ratna Prakashan, Calcutta, 1996, pp. 230, Rs. 350.00

Days and Nights
By Sujata Miri
The story of woman's search for the ideal man from childhood and marriage, through partition and on to Calcutta and Delhi.
National Publishing House, 1996, pp. 147, Rs. 200.00

■ LINGUISTICS

Grammar, Language and Society: Contemporary Indian Contributions
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The central purpose of the collection is to bring together some of the best in contemporary Indian linguistics by grounding them in the other, often conflicting, traditions that the Indian linguist is heir to.
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Oxford India Paperbacks, OUP, 1998, pp. 279, Rs. 295.00

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Manohar in association with The Book Review Literary Trust, 1998

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East-West Books, Chennai, 199[illegible] pp. 412, Rs. 750.00, Foreword by Khushwant Singh

The Fiery Quill: Nationalism and Literature in Maharashtra
By Balkrishna Govind Gokhale
This volume explores the dimensions of the contribution of literature to the growth of nationalistic ideas in Maharashtra between the 1870's and 1920's.
Popular Prakashan, 1998, pp. 19[illegible] Rs. 275.00

Halodhiya Charaye Baodhan Khay (Assamese)
Homen Borgohain
This is the searing story of a humble farmer's desperate struggle for survival that turns into a quest for justice. The tight narrative never flags or deviates from Raseswar's haunting battle for survival but there are touches of rural humour and an occasional glimpse of the freshness and beauty of the countryside that mitigate the harsh harrowing account of oppression.
Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1997 Rs. 195.00

The Colours of Evil
Translated from the Tamil
By N. Kalyana Raman
Winner of 1996 Sahitya Akademi Award, Asokamitran arrives, in these stories, at a larger sense of the world through the trials and tribulations of ordinary people.
Manas (E.W. Books), Madras, 1998 pp. 201, Rs. 135.00

The Complete Works of Kalidasa: Vol. 1 Poems
Translated by Chandra Rajan
This three volume edition of Kalidasa's works planned by the Sahitya Akademi brings his writing to a much larger audience. Chandra Rajan has given lengthy critical introductions to each volume that helps to place the texts in their wider context and suggests ways to helps place the texts in their wider context and suggests ways of studying them.
Sahitya Akademi, 1997, pp. 388 Rs. 350.00

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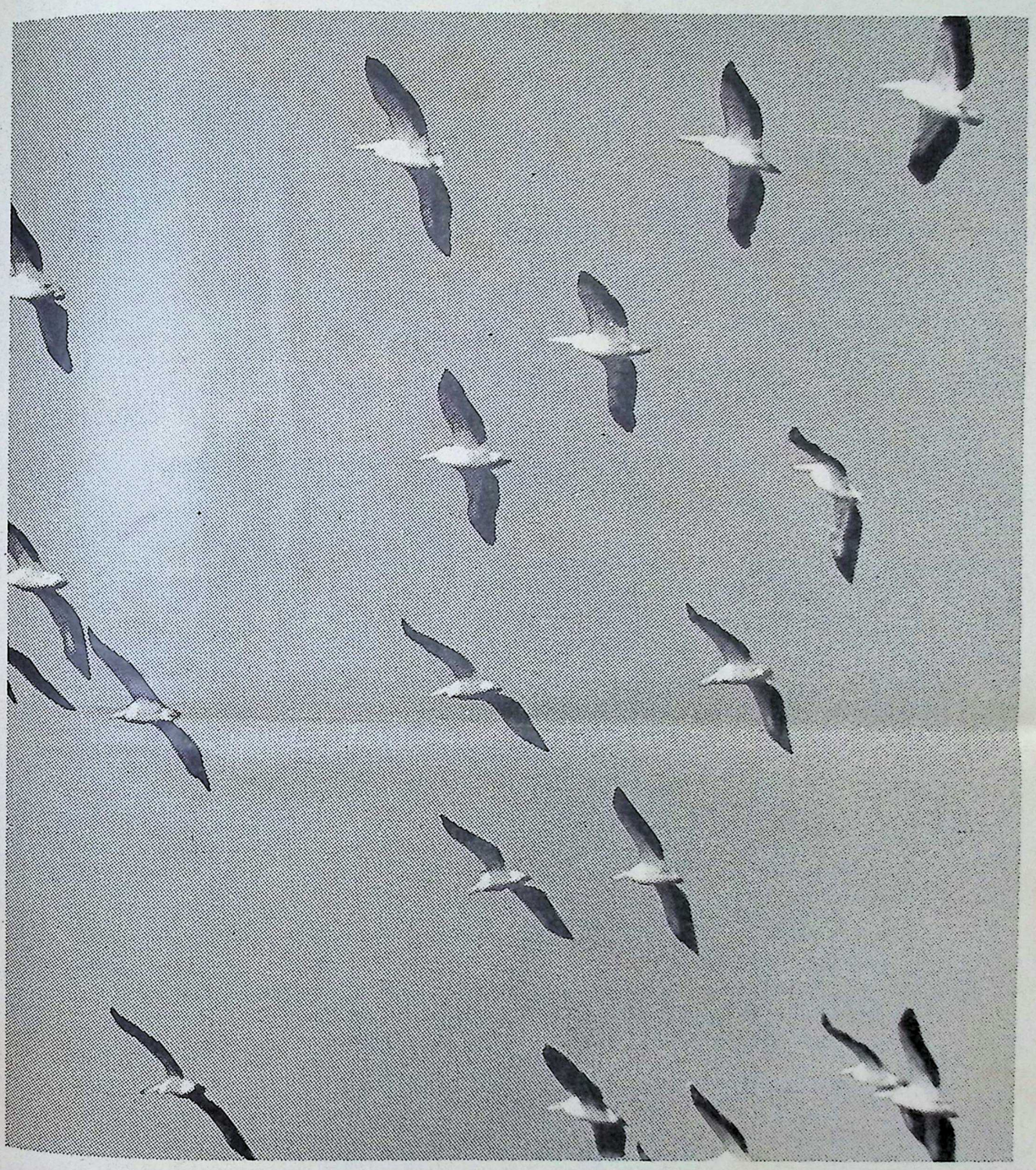

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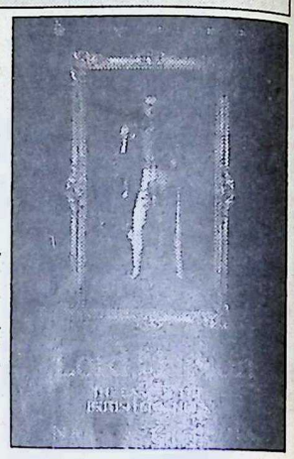

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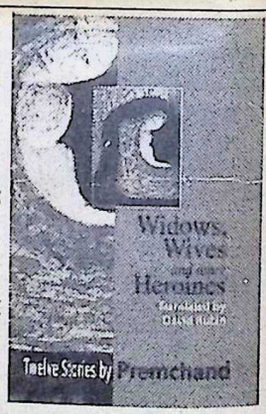

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THE BOOK REVIEW

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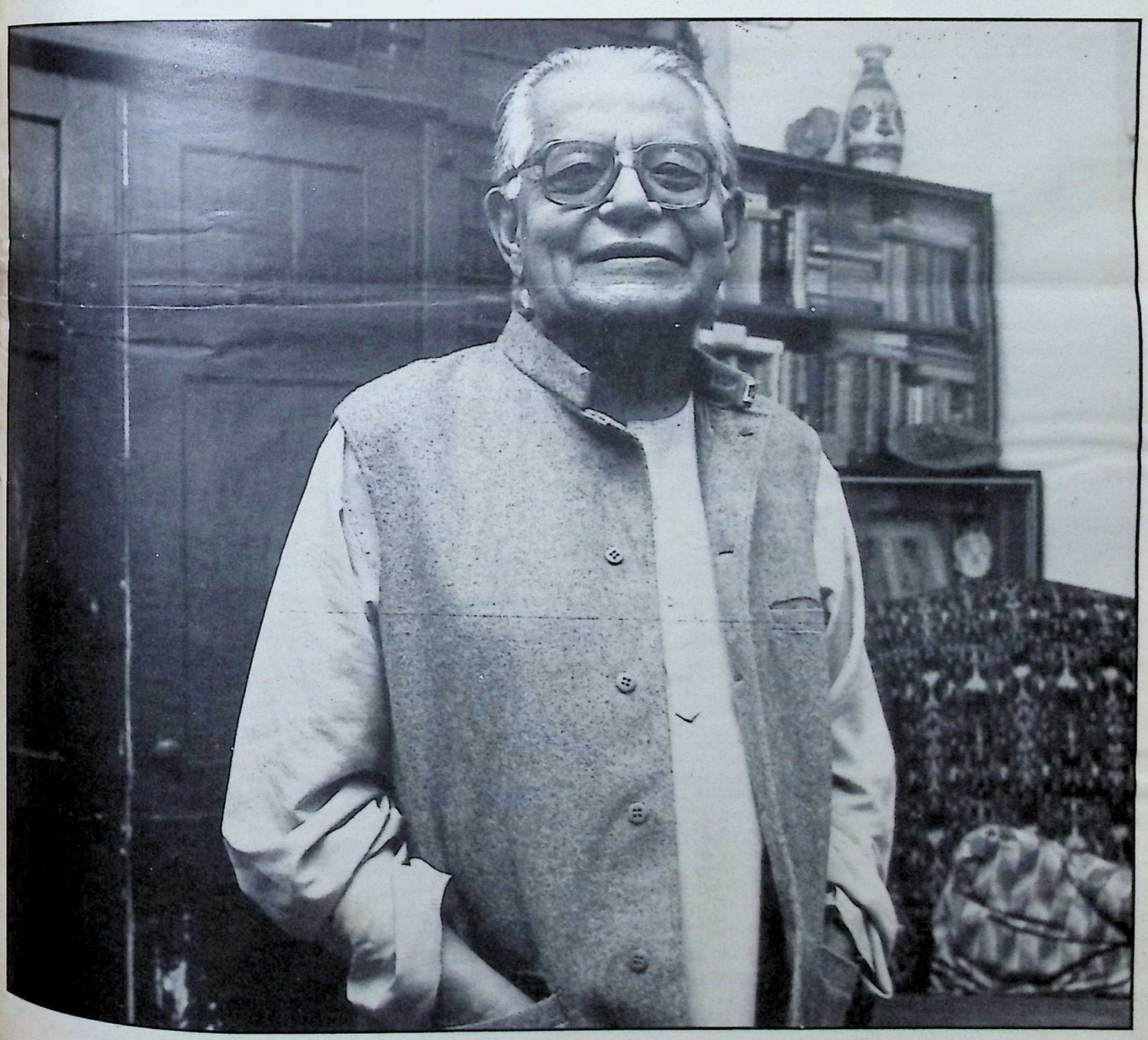

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Nikhil Chakravartty

(1913–1998)

मा कुरू धन जन यौवन गर्व। हरति निमेषात्काल: सर्वम।।

(Do not pride yourself on (the possession of) fortune, kinsmen or youth. For, Time is a great leveller who takes away everything in a moment.)

Nikhil Chakravartty, Dada of *Mainstream*, passed away on 27 June and the truth of the lines from the *Bhaja Govindam* quoted above hits one hard again. Though he was often wont to declare that every year after seventy is a bonus in a lifetime, one could not associate death with Nikhilda while he lived, joyously, with involvement in and commitment to things big and small. For every one of us who had the privilege of working with him, of being trained by him, his comfortable, benign presence was a given. We took it for granted that we could tap at will his unlimited fund of stories and anecdotes, and the richstorehouse of grass-roots wisdom that he could effortlessly communicate. And now he is suddenly not there and the void hurts more than words can express.

The obituaries in the national dailies have set forth the details of Nikhil Chakravartty's life at length. Born on 3 November 1913 at Silchar in Assam, the son of a professor of English in Calcutta University, he was a brilliant student who took English Honours with first class from the prestigious Presidency College of Calcutta, and then went to Merton College, Oxford, for further studies. He taught history in Calcutta University from 1939 and met and married Renu Roy, the niece of Dr. B.C. Roy. In 1943, under the guidance of P.C. Joshi, the then general secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), he became a card-holder and a correspondent of the CPI weekly *People's War*. He went underground before Independence and was arrested by the British.

Nikhil Chakravartty moved to Delhi in 1952 when his wife got elected to the LokSabha. He worked for *New Age* and launched the *India Press Agency* in 1957 and the weekly *Mainstream* in 1962. He created a special niche for himself by his fearless expression of views against the Emergency. He published a booklet entitled *Maruti to Mafia* during this time which caught the public imagination. In 1978, he left the CPI but remained a strong advocate of Left unity.

In 1983, he became the founder Chairman of NAMEDIA and president of the Editor's Guild. He was appointed Chairman of the Prasar Bharati Board after the Act to pave way for the autonomy of Doordarshan and All India Radio came into being. As a member of the Press Council and the Press Commission, he became wholly involved in the trials and tribulations of journalists in the small towns of India and forgotten areas like the North East.

Behind these bald statements was the man—Nikhil, Nikhilda, Mr. Chakravartty, who commanded the respect of even those whom he criticized and the adoring hero-worship of all his junior colleagues and the staff who worked for him. As one gazed down upon the serene face set in death and his big eyes closed forever, one remembered the way they would soften—in affection, as they looked upon a child, or in compassion, as he heard or recounted a tale of woes of the downtrodden; and twinkle while poking gently malicious fun at the high and the mighty.

This humaneness and compassion were at the core of Nikhilda's personality. Wholly un-worldly about money matters, no one who went to him for help financially was ever turned away. Pungently critical though he invariably was about the ills that affect our society and polity, it was his approach of amused tolerance for human foibles which raised his incisive political commentaries on the contemporary political scene above the ordinary.

For us at *The Book Review*, Nikhil Chakravartty cannot be remembered as anything less than a patron-saint. He was there with Chitra Narayanan at the time of the founding of the journal in 1976 and was a contributor to the first issue. Then, just two years later, when the journal faced extinction because all the three founding editors found themselves living away from Delhi, it was he who stepped in and offered to run *The Book Review*, till such time as we were able to reclaim it. And run it he did for eleven long years at no small financial cost as literary journals like ours seldom mint money. It was on his advice that The Book Review Literary Trust was established in 1989. However even after handing back his charge, he not only continued on the advisory board of *The Book Review* and often wrote for the journal but continued to lend us the support of his staff when necessary. And in a magnanimous gesture he included *The Book Review* among others when distributing the prize-money from his B.D. Goenka award.

To our everlasting regret, Nikhilda refused till the last, despite repeated entreaties, to allow us to record his memoirs, and a storehouse of experience, knowledge and wisdom has died with him. Perhaps this reluctance sprang from his belief that just because a journalist is used to writing on everything under the sun did not mean that he or she can produce a book. "For a newsman producing a report on any happening is not the same thing as producing a book on the subject. The professional hazards of one are different from those of the other,", he wrote in an article entitled 'The Scribe as Muse' for *The Book Review* recently.

On behalf of my co-trustees, Uma Iyengar and Chitra Narayanan, and the members of the *TBR* advisory board, I end this with salutations to Nikhilda—fearless, compassionate and kind, generous teacher, loving father, doting grandfather, good friend and unequivocal critic of wrong doing—whose extraordinary values in life will serve as a beacon for the innumerable lives which touched his own. Above all he leaves behind him the memory of his abiding, unwavering faith in the people of India. He was one of his kind, as his tribute to the people of India after the ending of the Emergency giving them the sole credit for putting democracy back on its rails made abundantly clear.

C.C.

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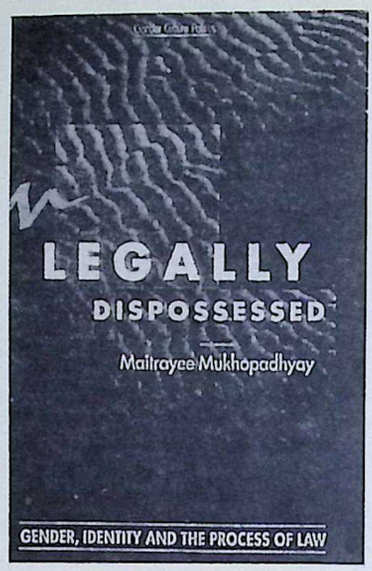
A Nuanced Analysis

Ratna Kapur

LEGALLY DISPOSSESSED: GENDER, IDENTITY AND THE PROCESS OF LAW

By Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay

Stree, Calcutta, 1998, pp. 258, Rs. 180.00



Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay's book, *Legally Dispossessed: Gender Identity and the Process of Law*, represents an important work in new scholarship on feminist legal studies emerging in India as well as a provocative book in our current phase of Right wing politics. The thrust of her concern is with the personal laws specifically of the Hindu and Muslim communities and women's experiences in resorting to litigation to access or enforce their rights, particularly in the arena of marriage and inheritance. The author tellingly brings out the complexity of terms such as democracy and secularism, which can no longer be regarded as universalisms that are enjoyed equally by all. Her work is developed from the subject position of the female litigant, who does not exist *a priori* to gender, class, caste, religion and community, but rather is structured by and through these multiple identities. Mukhopadhyay's research is conducted through an ethnographic lens that involves interviews with women litigants. She develops a complex notion of the subject and how women themselves try to negotiate their multiple identities when engaging with the law.

The main focus of Mukhopadhyay's work is on women's experiences of litigation under personal laws. Her interviews reveal how difficult it is to disentangle women's identity as a subject-citizen who is imbued with rights from her identity as mother, wife, sister and widow in the family. It is in part the failure to address the multiplicity of the subject that resulted in the conflation of feminist demands for a Uniform Civil Code with those of the Hindu communal Right.

Mukhopadhyay's work represents an important shift as it focuses on litigation rather than law reform and legal text. She examines the nature of disputes, the attitudes of lawyers, the experience in court, and the logic of judgements to try and arrive at a more complex and enabling analysis of "what is at stake in feminist and other struggles around citizenship today" (p.6). There is a need for such complex analysis in order to ensure that litigation strategies are also rendered more complicated. The resort to litigation has been fraught with hazards and difficulties for feminists and women litigants, as the stories related by the author reveal. Litigants are dependent upon lawyers and judges who determine how issues are put across, prioritized and decided.

The introduction sets out the parameters of her work and analysis. She discusses the historical genealogy of the personal laws of the Hindu and Muslim communities during the British period and how both norms were ostensibly 'discovered' or excavated and came to be regarded as law. She also reviews the work of Lata Mani and to a lesser extent Partha Chatterjee, to examine how women's identity came to be the ground on which tradition was reformulated as well as deployed by the nationalist project to oppose colonial rule.

The author argues that until such time as India is ready to enact the directive principle of the Constitution whereby the state is obliged to enact a Uniform Civil Code, which will consolidate the laws of all the communities, the personal laws are being "temporarily harboured" under the overarching secular law. She argues that personal laws have served as a terrain for debates and contests around religious identity. The Hindu political Right has used the existence of personal laws as a way to argue that the state is violating the Constitution by not enacting the same laws for all its citizens. The minority community in turn maintains that personal laws serve as the only legal protection that they have as minorities in India and that it is the role of the state to serve as a guarantor of the distinctive and separate identities of the minority community.

Religious identity comes to be represented as a political identity the state is compelled to negotiate. And identity becomes an issue when it comes into crisis as exemplified in the Shah Bano case. Identity, in this instance religious identity, came to acquire a meaning through the process of mobilization that took place at a moment of crisis. The decision was rendered at a time when the secular contract of the 1950's and 1960's had broken down. And it set up gender identity in opposition to the religious identity of Shah Bano. The decision also came at a time when the demand for a Uniform Civil Code was intensified during the rise of Hindu majority communalism. The decision thus represented to some Muslims a violation of the Muslim personal law and their authentic identity. The representation of the Muslim personal law as authentic tradition had the effect of mobilizing the community, invisibilizing Shah Bano's gender identity, as well as to mobilize the state. Shah Bano publicly denounced the decision and the state enacted the *Protection of Muslim Women Women's Rights on Divorce Act*, in 1986.

Mukhopadhyay is primarily concerned with the way in which the feminist project for women's equality was so easily appropriated by both patriarchal and communal interests. This concern stimulates her interrogation into the gender analysis informing the feminist project. She argues that a neutralized subject structured in the dominant culture, informs both Marxist and feminist politics as well the prevailing understanding of rights, democracy, and secularism. And it is this concern that brings the author to an engagement with law and its purported neutrality in relation to caste, class, religion and community, and its hidden ideology. She proceeds to examine the "hidden structuring of the neutral-subject citizen, the processes of 'norming', the exclusions this results in and how this serves to secure asymmetrical relations between genders and extend patriarchal power" (p. 28). Her specific task is to examine litigation brought by women in the area of maintenance and property rights and ask: "(a) how the private domain of social relations is connected to the public domain of the politico-jural, the state; (b) which social relations are being taken for granted, 'normed' and invisibilized through this connection; and (c) how patriarchal power is created through the process of adjudication" (*ibid*).

The first part of the book is based on ethnographic research wherein the author examines the struggles for family property that Hindu and Muslim wives, sisters, daughters and widows wage in court, the outcome of these struggles and the basis on which entitlements are granted and fixed. For example, in the context of Hindu marriage and maintenance laws, her findings reveal how the rhetoric of equality has obscured rather than revealed the fact that most awards are made on the assumption of women's economic dependence. Husbands and wives are constituted differently with different rights. As she states, "[W]omen as wives do not fit the legal definition of 'subject' in relation to 'objects' (property) because their relationship to property is mediated by their subordinate position in the conjugal relationship giving them little access to and control over resources (at 76)."

Another example is Muslim women's rights to maintenance, where Mukhopadhyay's research identifies a shift after the Shah Bano case in the way in which Muslim identity comes to be constituted in the 1980's and 1990's during the rise of the Hindu political Right. She discusses how the debates around Shah Bano contributed to the constitution of a new Muslim tradition, which was posited as retrogressive and obscurantist as well as oppressive to women. This re-constitution marked a radical departure from earlier conceptions of the Muslim tradition as being just, woman-friendly, even though it

The Hindu political Right has used the existence of personal laws as a way to argue that the state is violating the Constitution by not enacting the same laws for all its citizens. The minority community in turn maintains that personal laws serve as the only legal protection that they have as minorities in India and that it is the role of the state to serve as a guarantor of the distinctive and separate identities of the minority community.

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was religion bound. Her ethnographic research reveals how this new understanding of Muslim tradition has informed the amounts awarded by the courts to divorced women and the underlying justifications in making these awards. Hindu judges are continuously remarking on the instability of the Muslim marriage which 'does not prohibit polygamy and allows Muslim men to unilaterally divorce wives by pronouncing talak'. The Muslim male and what is regarded as the Islamic religion and culture, come to be simultaneously demonized. And the Hindu judge becomes implicated in ostensibly carrying on the 'civilizing' mission that parallels the self appointed role of the colonial power in the nineteenth century. Invisibilized in this entire process is the need to redefine women's property right in marriage.

The chapters on rights to inheritance as well as the Hindu widow and property, also expose the relationship of dependency constructed in and through law and the responses of judges. In particular, the Hindu widow's rights to property cannot be seen outside both the relationship of dependency as well as the cultural meaning accorded to widowhood, which constrains women from exercising the secular rights granted by the state.

In the second part of the book, Mukhopadhyay sets out the relationship of women to the state and examines the primary discourse of citizenship that frames the relationship. She argues that women are implicated in the state's project of modernization, progress and development. She explores the relationship between women and the state through the experiences of the contemporary women's movement and how the process of cultural constructions of the nation informs this relationship. The weakening of state controls over the economy and the closer alliance emerging between the state and the dominant classes, has made it more difficult for the state to maintain its alliance with the subaltern classes. To prevent a crisis of legitimacy in the wake of this breakdown the 'nation' has to be 'imagined' anew, and the identities of both 'state and 'citizen' redefined. New forms of Indianness, which act as cement in the process of reworking this alliance, are being forged.

In chapter six, the author analyzes the demand for a Uniform Civil Code as a signifier of national unity. She traces the history of the demand for such a code in 1940, and explores the multiple meanings that the UCC acquired. She argues that the UCC represented "both a site of desire and a threat". It was a site of the desire for unity of nation and homogeneity of legal citizenship, promising to resolve the conflicting claims on the subject of nation-state and religious community. At the same time, it was a threat to the very identity and particularity of minorities. As the debates continued in post-independence India, the UCC became a "strategy for delineating the identity of majority and minority communities". Mukhopadhyay then turns to the debates around the UCC in the 1980's, the crisis in secularism and the escalation of communal conflicts during this time. She explores at some length the position of the BJP on the UCC, and the extent to which this position is related to their effort at assimilating the minorities. She further examines how feminists found themselves sharing the same platform as the Right in their position on the UCC and the implications of this for gender equality. She argues that feminists cannot assume that democracy and secularism will provide the structural guarantees for achieving gender equality. Her research indicates that these concepts together with the rights of the individual and citizenship acquire meaning in and through social relations, ideology and historical processes. She argues that feminist politics and theory must move out of an epistemology that "maps gender identity on to the model of the humanist subject or citizen-subject to making visible the processes of norming from the point of view of those who are excluded" (p. 221).

Mukhopadhyay's book contributes to an increasingly complex and nuanced analysis of the role of law in women's oppression and its potential role in challenging that oppression. Her contextual analysis of the female litigant in the context of property, inheritance, and maintenance disputes, reveals the complex location of the subject. Her research demonstrates how caste, class, gender and religious identities, mediate women's access to their rights, reinforces dominant constructions of women, and constructs the religious identity of both the minority and majority communities. She argues in favour of local and context specific initiatives, which deploy democracy and secularism as critical tools rather than as structural guarantees and expose the hidden structuring of the normative gender-neutral subject in law. Mukhopadhyay's book is not only a significant contribution to feminist legal studies, but will also be useful to sociologists, women studies departments, and political theorists.

Ratna Kapur is an Advocate and Co-Director, Centre for Feminist Legal Research, New Delhi.

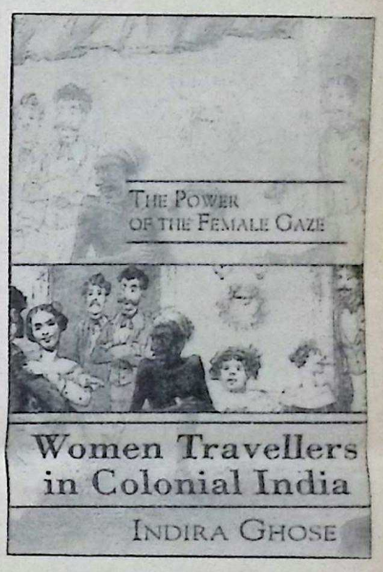
Is There A Female Gaze?

Shampa Roy

WOMEN TRAVELLERS IN COLONIAL INDIA: THE POWER OF THE FEMALE GAZE

By Indira Ghose

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 196, Rs. 350.00



In one of Satyajit Ray's films *Agantuk*, the protagonist, an old man committed to a life of homeless, rootless travelling, stresses the importance of such constant mobility and the 'education' it entails, which is, according to him far superior to any formal method of teaching. He warns his young nephew, "Remember, if you do not step out of your limited confines and travel, you will become a *'kupamunduk'* (a frog in a well)". Such aestheticization of travel, such an understanding of it simply as edifying and civilizing in its unproblematic influence, an universal, apolitical act, erases the ways in which the act and motives of travel and the encounters it produces are, and have been inflected with social and political ideologies. Travel and the culture of travel for instance have played crucial roles in Europe's expansionist trajectory.

Following in the footsteps of Mary Louise Pratt's important book *Imperial Eyes* which rejects an apolitical understanding of travel and defines European travel literature in terms of the imperial metropolis' "need to present and represent its peripheries and its others continually to itself"[1], Indira Ghose's study focuses on the ideological negotiations within a specific kind of 19th century English travel literature—those produced by upper and middle class Englishwomen travelling in colonial India.

A study of Victorian women's writings on travels in India is potentially an examination of the complexly imbricated ideologies of race, nation and above all gender, for travel, with its connotations of adventure, exploration and expansion had been, since the beginning of the 18th century central to the subject formation of the white aristocratic English male. The study of women's travel writings has become, however, a fairly over-inscribed area of research over the past few years. Yet given the wide range of writings Ghose has brought together in her book, one begins it with the hope that it will have fresh insights on the subject.

Using a post-modernist theoretical framework, Ghose's work promises to "reinstate" women as agents of their own history. "Unfortunately," says Ghose in her introduction, research on women travellers remains largely uncontaminated by post-structuralist theory." And as if to leave no doubt in the readers' minds about the thorough "contamination" of her own work by post-structuralist theory she quotes profusely from various post-structuralist critics and chants the oft-heard post-modernist *mantra* about plural, unstable identities, multiplicity and non-essence within historical contexts that can only be narrated but never recorded. "As various critics have made clear, it is in the best interests of feminism to align itself with post-structuralism and relinquish cherished notions of female essence." While indeed feminism benefits by associating with post-structuralist thought which reconceptualizes subjectivity and provides powerful critique of political interests sheltered within western metaphysics, its exclusive celebration of a pluralist paradigm ultimately proves

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damaging for feminism's political agenda. Therefore, even as one fully agrees with Ghose that there is no female essence, no essentially female gaze and that woman is a socially constructed category, one wishes for a greater clarification and explanation of her statements about "women's agency" and "women's radical assertion of a female identity." Is she then suggesting, quite contrary to her post-structuralist assumptions that there is an area of non-discursive experience—lived reality—from which women draw their agency, their radical female identity? Or can the concept of agency be retained without returning to naive concepts of lived experience outside ideology? For instance by seeing it as a counter-hegemonic discourse, the enabling conditions for which are the contradictions produced by exploitative and oppressive social relations under patriarchal capitalism? Whatever it is, Ghose needs to recognize and address this problem.

She must however be lauded for asserting that though interested in retrieving women's voices, she does not wish to fetishize gender at the cost of other factors, nor occlude the possibility of women's active participation in the oppressive colonial, racial structures.

Of the seven chapters into which the book is divided, four explore different women travellers' responses to those aspects of India that popularly gripped the colonial imagination—orientalist learning, the zenana, the exotic India landscape and the Mutiny—while two focus specifically on two particular women travellers' experiences and writings, the discursive mode of one (Emily Eden) and the purportedly apolitical altruism of another (Mary Carpenter). However, the assignation of separate chapters to these different themes and an exclusive focus on the ideologies which seem to have shaped the responses to them, has its disadvantages. It disallows, for instance, the possibility of reading in terms of historical formations within which different and sometimes contradictory ideologies crisscross with each other as they complexly shape the processes of meaning making. Thus, the discourse of ethnography that is invoked while examining Fanny Parks' gaze on the Indian landscape, is forgotten when her gaze on the zenana women is discussed. Nor is there any discussion of how a similar historical context could have produced such dissimilar voices as Emily Eden's ironic one that sees Indians as potentially resistant and Mary Carpenter's earnestly preachy one that sees them only as so many unenlightened creatures awaiting reform.

The chapters are packed with well-researched information though some important questions remain unaddressed, some issues remain unexplored.

In the chapter titled "In Search of the Picturesque" for instance, Ghose does not give any historical evidence or explanation for her statement about the Picturesque being, from its inception, "a practice culturally coded male." She also asserts, "the aestheticizing stance displayed in the texts of the picturesque is symptomatic both of women's marginalized position in British India as well as of women's self-image as spectators of empire." Such an analysis omits to point out however that the conventions of aesthetic principally based on Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* made feminine beauty synonymous with fairness and softness, qualities which only an idle life confined within the domestic sphere could produce. It also played an important role in class/gender formation for working class women with their long hard hours of outdoor labour could hardly aspire to meet these standards of feminine beauty.

Women like Fanny Parks who chose with such enthusiasm a life of constant outdoor travel (especially Parks who in her enthusiasm often abandoned her husband saying it was her duty to herself to leave him and travel about) were, even as they assessed the beauty of India's landscape by given conventions themselves choosing to risk its loss by those same standards.

However they also replicate the oppressive structures of class and race by completely excluding from their beauty-searching gaze the several figures of women labourers on fields and farms they are bound to have seen, and choosing instead to train it on the zenana-bound women.

In the chapter devoted to an examination of the Englishwomen's gaze on the zenana women, Ghose divides the former into three categories—erotic, compassionate and conservative. Of these three the last two are historicized in terms of the post-Mutiny waning of the evangelical/utilitarian reformatory zeal and the subsequent taking on of this reform work by the growing British feminist movement which constructed the women of the colonies as passive victims of barbaric practices to bolster their self-image and create work opportunities for themselves in those areas. But the gaze of the early 19th century women travellers that saw zenana women as sensual and languorous is essentialized and read in trans-historical terms as synonymous with the orientalist gaze of western

Of the seven chapters into which the book is divided, four explore different women travellers' responses to those aspects of India that popularly gripped the colonial imagination—orientalist learning, the zenana, the exotic India landscape and the Mutiny—while two focus specifically on two particular women travellers' experiences and writings, the discursive mode of one (Emily Eden) and the purportedly apolitical altruism of another (Mary Carpenter).

writers and painters across histories and cultures (Thomas Dallan in 1598 gazing at the Turkish Sultan's concubines, the painter Thomas Daniell's 'Zenana Scene' in 1804, Lady Montagu's *Letters from Turkey* in 1763) which have reductively sexualized the eastern woman. The feminist theory of female spectatorship of Hollywood images of the sensual woman that Ghose uses to read the erotic gaze is hardly adequate for understanding the historical specificities within which the stereotype operated in the Indian context and the ideological alibi it served alongside, for instance, that other powerful early 19th century western stereotype of the Indian woman—the oppressed though remarkably virtuous 'suttee'.

In the chapter on Mutiny writings Ghose declares her intention to focus on not the iconized figures of the Mutiny like Miss Wheeler but the accounts of "real women whose husbands were murdered and who were forced to endure sieges." She notes that the narrative persona constructed in these writings is "active in self-survival rather than a victim waiting to be sacrificed. By constructing a resourceful and independent female subject they pose a threat to the colonial image of the woman as a passive victim." This is an insightful reading which Ghose acknowledges having borrowed from Jenny Sharpe. However one also needs to remember that by the mid-19th century one of the ways in which the crisis of subjectivity produced by the emergence of the New Woman was sought to be contained by the hegemonic culture was, by producing a revised version of the New Englishwoman by grafting ideas of imperial destiny and race and class superiority on to traditional views of English motherhood. The 'true' New Woman was thus represented as self-disciplined, resilient, with remarkable capacity for endurance of hardship and physical suffering, and therefore a fit woman and mother for the empire, her new, widened domestic sphere.

However, the account of Mrs Duberley's experiences in the Mutiny well analysed by Ghose indicates yet another way in which such an account was capable of opening up a gap in the contemporary hegemonic representation of the Mutiny which racialized it as Indian barbarity and violence thus masking its political connotations. Mrs Duberley's gaze sensitive to the suffering of several Indians during the Mutiny interrupts this representation by drawing attention to British atrocities.

In the concluding chapter Ghose poses the vital question, "Do women travellers perceive India differently than male travellers? Is there, in fact, a female gaze?" Her post-structuralist fear of essentializing makes her answer that since subjectivities are fractured and unstable there can be no essential female gaze just as there is no essential India or Indian to be gazed at. A celebration of multiplicity and difference is useful to the extent that it makes the category of 'real' not given or unalterable. But it does not make visible the structural links between such differences and larger social, political and economic arrangements that determine the distribution of resources, division of labour and power with a particular historical formation.

We therefore need a critical framework that, while using post-structuralist insights, does not shrink from acknowledging the systematic operation of social totalities like patriarchy and racism. There are, inspite of similarities, crucial differences between Macaulay's rhetoric on India and Emily Eden's letters on the same subject though both travelled the country in the 1830s. This indicates that they were interpellated differently as subjects through colonial discourses and were negotiating them in somewhat different ways. This book would have benefited by the inclusion of examples of the colonial male gaze for a comparison would have helped in a fuller understanding of the complex processes of the women's negotiations and resistance at work.

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Kaleidoscopic Glimpses

N. Subba Reddy

TRIBAL COHESION

By Urmila Pingle and Christof Von Furer-Haimendorf

Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, 1998, pp. 171, Rs. 200.00

Furer-Haimendorf's pioneering achievements in the realm of Indian Anthropology are legendary. His sustained field studies spread over five decades in the central and eastern regions of India, as well as in parts of Nepal, resulted in well known monographs on the Chenchus, Konda Reddis, Raj Gonds and the Konyak Nagas. Besides being a researcher, he also served as a special administrator for the tribal areas under the erstwhile Nizam State in the early forties during which years he rendered yeoman services to the aboriginals by assigning to them thousands of acres of land. While, in the later years, he was professionally anchored at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, he made use of his vacations and sabbaticals for his annual pilgrimage to some of the areas he had studied earlier in Andhra Pradesh or Arunachal Pradesh, right until he was physically disabled and breathed his last in 1995.

During his visits and revisits to his old haunts, Haimendorf kept meticulous notes on the changes that took place in the subsequent years, particularly as a result of the incursions of commercial and political elements into the tribal areas leading to continuous usurpation of tribal lands by the non-tribals. Compiling these notes he brought out a subsequent volume entitled *Tribes of India: Struggle for Survival* (published by Oxford University Press in 1983). His annual visits continued even in the late eighties and early nineties and he went on recording the changing scenario among the communities he had studied earlier. Urmila Pingle who holds a degree in medicine besides a doctorate in population genetics, earlier collaborated with Haimendorf in writing a booklet, *Gonds and their Neighbours: A Study in Genetic Diversity*. During the later phase of Haimendorf's life, she was his companion in the field trips and eventually become the custodian of the information collected and impressions recorded. Urmila Pingle has put them together in the present volume after the death of Haimendorf.

The intent of the authors is not to present holistic vignettes of particular tribes but to offer 'kaleidoscopic' glimpses of the 'symbiotic' relations between neighbouring tribes in the form of economic relations, social exchanges and shared religious beliefs and rituals, besides a few comparisons and contrasts in the life situations of some of the communities. Striking indeed is the way certain unique features of a dominant tribe come to be taken over by other tribes. Also noteworthy is the fact that major communities of a region come to subscribe to the cults of smaller groups recognized as original settlers of the land and hence having a special rapport with the local deities.

The Raj Gonds have a complex system of descent groups organized at the first level into clans, each bearing a particular name, which are regrouped at the second level into four phratries. Each phratry derives its nomenclature from the number of ancestral deities believed to be associated with it. Thus their designations run from four-deity phratry to seven-deity phratry. This unique system of phratry divisions along with the nomenclature has been adopted not only by Pardhans who are the traditional bards and Raj Gonds but by other tribes such as Koyas, Kolams, Mannes etc.

In the tract between the Godavari and Penganga rivers, where Koyas, Mannes and Naikpods live in close proximity, the former two tribes have this kind of descent organization, while the Naikpods, who consider themselves superior to other tribes by virtue of their abstinence from pork and beef, have descent groups similar in their structure and nomenclature to those of the Telugu castes. But a section of the Naikpods living in the close proximity of Raj Gonds in Rajura Taluk have adopted the four-phratry system.

The populous tribe of Koyas is served by a class of functionaries known as Kololu, who too have clans similar to those found among the former. An individual functionary with the same clan name as his patrons performs the marriage and funeral ceremonies for the latter. The Koyas together with Mannes are served by another community of bards known as Totis. They narrate stories from *Mahabharata*, sometimes tracing the descent of Koyas and Mannes from the key characters in the epic.

In the tracts where the Koyas and Konda Reddis live in close proximity, there are mututally benificial economic exchanges between then. The Konda Reddis exchange the baskets they make for the iron implements forged by some of the Koya specialists. The food-gathering Chenchus barter their forest produce for a few head of cattle from pastoralists like the Banjaras and Kurmas.

The Hill Gonds of Bastar carry the images of their clan gods, once in a few years, over long distances to certain sacred sites in the territory of Koyas to be worshipped by the latter. Where the habitations of the Raj gonds and Kolams (a numerically small tribe) are interspersed, the latter act as village priests as they are recognized as the original settlers of the land, and the former pay obeisance at their shrines. Most of the tribal groups along the Godavari river consider Bhimana the most important mythical hero, the guardian of nature and their protecter. The Kolams, Koyas, Mannes and Konda Reddis share the wide-spread myth of Bhimana and Hidimbi as their ancestral figures.

In the previous works of Haimendorf, one finds a picture of the idyllic life of the unspoilt tribals before they became exposed to the rapacious traders and harrasing forest officials. In this book too, there are contrasting sketches of the peace and repose among the tribals left to their own ways on the one hand, and the stresses and strains that follow when once they are subjected to a new set of restrictive laws or the inroads of commercial and political forces of the other. An account of the tribals in Bastar, Madhya Pradesh is illustrative of the harmonious and peaceful life led by a tribal community carrying on shifting cultivation in its traditional way in which plots of land are equitably allotted among the families and crops are treated as results of the collective efforts of the village, with the old and the sick automatically getting a share in the produce. The narrative may better be read in the very words of the authors.

The intent of the authors is not to present holistic vignettes of particular tribes but to offer 'kaleidoscopic' glimpses of the 'symbiotic' relations between neighbouring tribes in the form of economic relations, social exchanges and shared religious beliefs and rituals, besides a few comparisons and contrasts in the life situations of some of the communities.

"The Abhujhmar Hills (in Bastar) are a geologically and culturally homogeneous area covered by dense deciduous forest. There was no sign of pressure on land, a consequence of low population density and an undisturbed traditional cultivation, consisting of a long fallow period of 12–14 years necessary for maintaining the ecological equilibrium of this hill region. The Hill Maria villages are small, consisting of less than 20 households generally belonging to the same clan. The village is the basic economic unit of shifting cultivators, all the villages collectively participating in sowing, threshing and protection of crops. The only activity that is done individually is the clearing and cutting of the podu fields. Each man can cut and clear two hectares of land with his wife and children helping in the ligher work. This much land is sufficient to sustain a family for a whole year, and in a good season may yield surplus. We came across a few households who had stock of grains left over from the previous year" (p. 66).

Explaining that the independence of the hill tribes was ensured in Bastar by the protectionist policies of the day, the authors refer to the contrasting conditions encountered across the border in Maharashtra.

"However due to differential state policies, artificial boundaries are being created in a culturally homogeneous and harmonious population, disturbing and perplexing these simple people. In 1981, when we revisited the villages in Maharashtra State, we found the nearest hill villages were now connected by a motorable road. The road was laid by the paper mill contractors who had succeeded in obtaining a lease for the exploitation of bamboo on the hills, the only region still retaining a natural bamboo forest in Maharashtra. With the approach of the forest contractors into the hills, the forest department simultaneously banned the Marias from carrying out their shifting cultivation. The Marias were complaining bitterly of harrassment by petty forest officials and the heavy fines they were subjected to, preventing them from cultivating in their traditional way. The people of Binakonda, the first accessible hill village, had already been stopped from carrying out shifting cultivation, and the families were subsisting on government doles..... Meanwhile the forest department was planning to lay a net-

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work of roads connecting all the 13 hill villages to facilitate full exloitation of the bamboo by paper mill contractors. With this act, the final blow would be dealt by commercial interests to both the forest and the aboriginal people who had co-existed over a millenium" (p. 67).

The situation has continuously changed for the worse in the recent years. Population pressure on the one hand and mindless expansion of the reserve forest boundary on the other have led to a drastic dimunition in the extent of land available for tillage. This has necessitated a shortening of the cultivation cycle and land to soil erosion. In the face of this stark reality which cannot be wished away is there a remedy on which there is a general agreement? Here is the dilemma and it becomes fully reflected in the last chapter of the book. The remedial action launched by a leading local landholder belonging to a dominant caste and a forward-looking administrator in Adilabad and Srikakulam districts was the propagation of horticulture in the form of mango and cashew orchards in the fields hitherto under shifting cultivation.

The benifits of the experiment are noted with appreciation towards the end of the book. "The income from the mango crop in 1990 ranged from Rs. 1000 to Rs.4000. per acre. . . This is a huge sum of money for a people previously living at a subsistence level" (p. 160). It is a moot question whether all the 800 acres reported to have been brought under mango orchards are in fact under the management of the tribals or they only represent the lands legally owned by the tribals but leased out to non-tribals on nominal rent (or in lieu of interest on debts). While further studies may be necessary to answer this question, the view expressed above does constitute a clear refutation of an earlier observation that the Maria Gonds of Bastar who stuck to millet cultivation are better off than the Raj Gonds of Adilabad District who adopted cash crops like cotton (p. 152). Here is a switch from one kind of faith to another as it were. Does it mean that the 'no-change' stance of older anthropology has been unobtrusively replaced by the 'pro-change' stance of new anthropology, or is it a case of the view of the younger collaborator silently nudging aside the view of the older one. The book under review does raise that debate.

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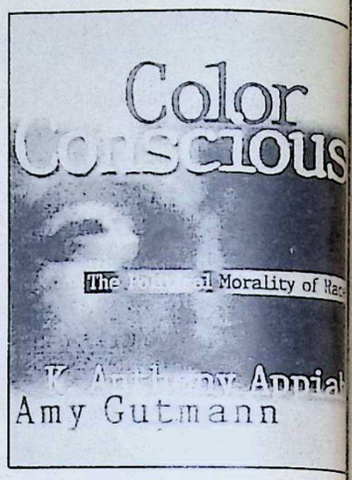
Race and the Politics of Recognition

Shelley Walia

COLOUR CONSCIOUS: THE POLITICAL MORALITY DEBATE

By K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann

Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, pp. 191,$ 21.95



The bitterness of the contemporary debate over such racially charged issues as affirmative action programme, multiculturalism, welfare reforms, and crime in the United States has provoked a rather loud response from mainly two schools: the "colour blind" and the "affirmative action". Both aim at racial justice, and the general nature and implications of liberalism in a nation which till today is faced by its most troublesome problem of discrimination.

Race is a social category that has evolved through the motivation of explaining differences between groups by mistakenly attributing various "essences" to them. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann in *Colour Conscious* take broadly two views on those intricate issues of race, culture, and identity that confound us all. Appiah argues that "while people of colour may still need to gather together, in the face of racism, under the banner of race, they need also to balance carefully the calls of race against the many other dimensions of individual identity". He tries to bring about some reconciliation between the John Rawls school of individual liberty and the "communitarian critics" who lay emphasis on the idea of racial identity. This makes the problem of toleration more troublesome and raises the question of the "extent to which any society can be morally and culturally pluralistic"

Amy Gutmann, on the other hand, maintains that the American society is not colour blind and, therefore, social justice can be achieved only through fairness and not though the principle of colour blindness. It cannot be denied that people and institutions mete out treatment to individuals according to their colour. Though their stands differ, both the writers are committed to a constitutional democracy where policies of colour and class consciousness will depend on an open-ended assessment" of their fairness and their capacity to move us clearly to a society with liberty and justice for all."

Since the first arrival of the pilgrims, it has been the strategy of the white race to consciously follow the principle of colour blindness with the emphasis on individual rights, freedom and identity. But this has been a camouflage for exclusion and dominance of the non-white races. Colour blindness they feel has always been synonymous with colour consciousness, the most American of problems.

Though modern liberalism is generally accepted by both the conservative Republicans and the liberal Democrats, how far the government is sincere in implementing the fundamental notion that it is there to play a positive role in assuring basic economic welfare is highly questionable. Undoubtedly no one is unopposed to anti-discrimination laws, but still the angry polemics generated in matters of race only indicate the nature of the problem. The government cannot be colour-blind because society isn't. Liberalism is just on paper. The growth of ethnic minorities, the re-emergence of nationalism, the women's movement and other significant social developments have all brought the state and the structure of liberal politics under terribly disintegrating pressures.

It is an undeniable fact of considerable political significance that in the wake of the heated debate on the affirmative action programme in the United States, American conservatives seeking to end positive discrimination are also guilty of siding with the tide of racial communitarianism, and collusion with white supremacists. President Johnson's set of laws and executive orders under the rubric "affirmative action" were framed with the main aim of bestowing certain rights on the marginalized sections of society so as to counter a racist past. And just when this was enabling many to enter higher education, a new wave of anti-affirmative revolt hit the University of California, Berkeley. A signature campaign began with the aim to outlaw any affirmative action plans on the ground that they are unconstitutional and infringe the basic fundamental right of equality. Meritocracy is emphasized against the colour of the skin. The leaders heading this attack work on the rationale that draw on Martin Luther's ideology which emphasized equality and content of merit rather than the ethnic background. Should testing people as individuals take precedence over compensations for the wrongs done in the past? And how can the legitimate claims to recognition by cultural groups be reconciled with the central liberal concern to respect the basic rights of all people whatever their moral or cultural beliefs?

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Contrary to individualist assumptions, cultures and persons define their identity in continuous dialogue with others. We are all social selves. This argument is problematic for the practice and theory of liberalism, challenging most obviously its universalisms

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... it must be acknowledged that America has a dual racial heritage and any racial discourse must take full cognizance of it. Both Appiah and Gutmann have given a balanced and readable account of the race issue with full attention on the promise of American ideals and their persistent failure.

political identity. With the collapse of social hierarchy a reconception and redefinition of notions of identity and authenticity calls for the recognition of equality and respect for the autonomy of individuals and cultural groups. In other words, a non-partisan approach of finding a middle ground between extremes of universalism and individual identity is needed

To evolve an unbiased action plan for the rights of minorities, this paradox of universalism and cultural autonomy must be taken into consideration so that the politics of recognition and difference form the basis of a critical frame that would counter any cultural imperialism that fails to recognize both the marginalized groups and particular identities. One way out of this impasse can be a more accommodating liberalism which cuts down a little on the universalism aspect and gives concessions for the recognition of cultural groups. This has been the dilemma, for instance, of the Indian or the Canadian Government where basic liberties are guaranteed, but along with these rights, the minority ethnic or socially backward groups are given some extra and concessionary rights, such as reservations in jobs or incentives for language promotion.

The concept of universal human rights has been criticized by some who argue that these rights reflect the anti-communitarian, self-centred individualism of the West with a disproportionate focus on individual autonomy. It can instead be posited that communities can exist in modern western societies which protect not only the civil and political rights but the whole spectrum of individual human rights including economic rights. There can be no bifurcation between universal human rights that recognize the equal dignity of all and a differentiation that recognizes the unique identity and authenticity of cultural groups and individuals.

A sense of community is essential in realizing the universality of human rights. In the modern world, for a community to work everyone must be treated equally, enjoy societal respect, and be able to act autonomously in her or his everyday decision-making. This view however challenges the Left which regards universalism as a form of cultural imperialism and refuses to recognize particular identities. Being a universalist, one would favour, like Rousseau, the blind non-discriminatory policies which overlook the importance of recognizing cultural identities, and make it impossible for a polity to allow for differentiation or political identities and goals. This kind of liberalism is obviously as restrictive as a neo-Kantian conception of a polity composed of free and equal citizens possessing universal rights. Contrary to the politics of recognition, Rousseau's liberalism in principally that of fairness and confines itself to procedural values.

It is difficult to set out ideal models that are based wholly on communitarian, self-centred individualism or cultural relativism. Conservative or Leftist communitarian challenges emanating from both the western world and the Third World need to evolve a more accommodating model that emphasizes the idea of social selves enjoying equal respect but dialogically defined so that homogeneity is not the aim of the state.

The views of the Right on racism are, therefore, too simplistic and exceedingly provocative owing to a lack of a historical sense, which is a disabling factor in understanding the brutality and ruthlessness with which white Americans maintained segregation and oppression for over a century. They have completely missed out the tentacular strategies of white violence, the operations of the Ku Klux Klan, the bias of the white judicial system and police intimidation, and geared towards a racial warfare with the sole purpose of showing black inferiority. Many still feel that all slavery was introduced for economic and not racist reasons and that segregation was not motivated by any desire for black oppression.

The growth of such ideas, the complicity of the legal machinery, and the indifference of the federal government towards racist violence have resulted in the demise of the philosophy of nonviolence that once infused agencies like the Congress of Racial Equality. Regrettably, the problem of inadequate schools for black children still persists; overt racism from white teachers is endemic. When race and racial divisions are a major political and social issue, books like *The End of Racism* or *The Bell Curve* (that puts forward the thesis that the blacks have the lowest IQ and shows that this is genetically true) do not, in any way, help the situation. There is inherent immunity in such works to the terrible effects of America's policy on race relations, the segregation not only in federal government agencies critical of the affirmative action programme, but also in residential housing, and education.

Conservatives do not realize that black under achievement or individual inadequacy in education has arisen out of consistent political decisions and entrenched systematic racist ideology. The economics of race and class in America amply indicates that such policies lead to the exclusion of blacks from apprenticeships, thus ensuring that skilled jobs go only to the whites who never face any competition from the unskilled or low-paid blacks. Federal intervention in the politics of race and class can bring about some racial equality as was seen in the period under Lyndon Johnson, but ideological conservatism of recent Reaganism backed by Bush, and now Clinton, has brought about a reduction of any firm commitment to the question of a concerted affirmative action programme. The practice of giving concessionary rights to the marginalized is religiously followed by Harvard University which has a remarkable diversity record among the Ivy League. Though John F. Kennedy, signing the executive order had pointed out that "discrimination because of race, creed, colour or national origin" was unconstitutional, the affirmative action programme was nevertheless introduced, and it is now under attack for being positively discriminatory. Republicans have pledged to abolish it on the ground that institutional racism is dead and that minorities must not exploit history as an excuse. On the other hand blacks are clear in their minds that the US is still not colour blind and that apartheid and its effects cannot be washed away so abruptly. Chang-Lin Tien, the Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, along with many academics is of the view that Latinos, Cambodians, Asian Americans all suffer discrimination and that it is only the affirmative action programme that will create an ideal educational atmosphere for all students. For the "playing field to be level" the racist thesis of Richard Hernstein and Charles Murray in their book, *The Bell Curve* (genes are certainly not the answer to group differences) or arguments that blacks score the lowest in SAT will not end centuries of oppression. Socio-economic factors along with the anti-intellectual culture of many minority secondary schools are ignored, in the words of Robert Woodson, by "degrading, dehumanising and damaging" denunciations of affirmative action programmes.

Government efforts to direct or improve the economy, or to introduce taxation policies which involve transfers of income from the affluent to the underprivileged, are noteworthy of liberal or social democratic solutions, though conservatives economists like Thomas Sowell would disagree with this Leftist ideology on the basis of evidence that shows that any employment on ethnic, racial, religious or gender lines is unprofitable and affects competition adversely. Such time-honoured conservative solutions only aim at "strengthening civilising institutions" such as churches and business enterprises. This smacks only of a coded political discourse on race that claims to never lose sight of human rights. No one can deny that racism is out there and the federal government cannot wash its hands off it to appease the "angry white males"

David B. Wilkins, in the introduction to the book under review, maintains that the nation is not only destined to fail to solve the problem of colour-line in this century, but it is "in danger of losing its ability even to talk about the subject intelligently". He goes on to add: "Far too often, speakers on both sides of the contemporary debates about race acknowledge only half of America's complex racial legacy. Those who oppose taking race into account, for example, when awarding benefits or designing educational curricula, point to the fact that our political institutions rest on principles of individual freedom and equality that expressly deny the moral or political significance of ascriptive characteristics such as race. On the other hand the school of multicultural supporters cite the extermination of indigenous Native American population done in the name of individual freedom and equality; for these advocates "colour blindness" is an ideological construct to hide the pervasive colour consciousness that has been a "dominant feature of the American saga" throughout the history of imperialism. It is for this reason Anthony Appiah feels that all that is argued about race matters is "dishonest, confused, ill informed, unhelpful". If any good is to come out of any discussion on this issue it must be acknowledged that America has a dual racial heritage and any racial discourse must take full cognizance of it. Both Appiah and Gutmann have given a balanced and readable account of the race issue with full attention on the promise of American ideals and their persistent failure. In the very provocative and intelligent essay, "Race,

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Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections", Appiah argues that race is a important aspect of the formation of identity, but its concept in America fails to explain the continuance of discrimination; nor does it "properly act as a surrogate for culture and identity".

Where there is oppression racial identities will always play a vital role, but if authentic freedom and equality have to be enjoyed "we shall have to move beyond current racial identities". Somewhat different from this view, Gutmann in her essay, "Responding to Racial Injustice", bases her arguments on social evidence which sufficiently indicates the influence of race on life in America. She would like individuals to be treated fairly, and to achieve this it would be important to "enact colour conscious policies". But this does not mean that such policies ignore the principles of equality and colour blindness which must be the basis if all decisions for maintaining fundamental equality of all human beings. Colour conscious policies would come in only where they are "instrumentally valuable" in overcoming any racial injustice.

Though the views of these two accomplished professors are of immense political and moral significance, they are still partial with a number of contradictory impulses that do not in any way suggest a model that can have a workable blend of the politics of recognition and individual liberty, a problem that is not only there in America, but is one of the main political sores in Quebec and in India. Shall we say that finally to side with the moral philosophers who go by untheoretical prudence respectful of individual cases and doubtful of universal prescriptions is not an adequate approach for the political morality of race. And yet for all its limitations, the book is consistently interesting and in many ways unsettlingly challenging to the settled opinions on race matters.

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Human Dilemma of Post—Communist Reconstruction

Santyayani Gupta

THE HAUNTED LAND: FACING EUROPE'S GHOSTS AFTER COMMUNISM

by Tina Rosenberg

Vintage Books, 1996, pp. 438, Rs. 310.00

This is a book with a difference; a sensitive portrayal of the decline and fall of Communism in Eastern Europe without a triumphalist or an apologetic tone. Tina Rosenberg avoids the temptation of seeing Communist collapse in the late 1980s as a win for western liberal democracy and market economics. Nor is her tour de force *The Haunted Land* a nostalgic paean to days of Stalinist totalitarianism, when Moscow held its East European satellites in an iron grip.

Indeed, Rosenberg brings out the human dilemma of post-Communist reconstruction in Eastern Europe by showing how the process is inextricably linked with the Communist past of the region. Guilt and complicity, acquiescence and dissent must necessarily assume shifting definitions in the painful transition from one era to another. And Rosenberg's concern is that the region may invent a new myth about state-sponsored repression under Communism as it grapples with fledgling democratic identities.

In her two-and-half year journey from 1991 onwards, in erstwhile East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland, Rosenberg met and spoke to a multitude of persons ranging from Marxist ideologues to statesmen and cynical spies. These meetings are faithfully recounted in her book; and the evocative vignettes which emerge can make every reader understand the harsh realities of life under Communist rule.

There is a touching cameo, for instance, of Czech dissident, Rudolf Zukal, which makes the dividing line between treason and duty appear in shades of the deepest grey. Zukal, a hero of the Prague Spring, an idealist and articulate human rights activist found himself clubbed as an ideological collaborator with the discredited Communist regime, after secret service archives were opened by the democratic government of Vaclav Havel in 1991. Reason: a former college classmate turned secret service agent had elicited information from Zukal, on a foreign acquaintance and had listed Zukal as an informer in secret service records. This leads to Rosenberg's central question, 'who is guilty in societies where almost everyone collaborated with the system in some way'. The book abounds in various other fascinating sketches which only prove the moral contradictions of decommunisation in Eastern Europe. Particularly memorable is an entire chapter of Polish aristocrat-turned Communist dictator General Jaruzelski, who still believes his declaration of martial law in Poland saved the country from Soviet invasion in 1981. From gun-toting border guards in the last days of the Berlin Wall, to freewheeling Charter 77 activists of Czechoslovakia to shadowy informers turned dissidents, the images are sharp and clearly focused, unfolding the tragedy of transition in Eastern Europe with stark precision.

Rosenberg delves deep into the apparatus of Communist dictatorships in an attempt to comprehend the psyche of Communist espionage. Shorn of its chilling glamour, the network is seen for what it was. Real life Karlas were cogs in a routine and vast machinery of apparatchik. Rosenberg's accounts of the encounters with former spymasters often border on the farcical, with the latter emerging as bumbling mandarins, thriving on wrong information and compiling dossiers on perceived enemies with all the ad hoc qualities of red tapism.

This is intelligent reportage at its best, combined with the right element of historical information and analysis. The build-up to watershed events such as the Prague Spring of 1968 and the clamping of martial law in Poland in 1981 are lucidly narrated. And the link between the past and present of the region is always deftly handled and expressed in a refreshingly cant-free style.

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In the ultimate analysis, Rosenberg quietly articulates the need for caution to the advocates of witch-hunting in the new democracies. Communist East Europe was a complex and many layered cornucopia of collaboration from the highest to the lowest. To exorcise the ghosts of the past, ordinary people must acknowledge their role in the forty-year old epoch of Communist repression; and Rosenberg is sceptical about any clinical break with an unpopular past without inventing history to suit the needs of the present.

The Haunted Land is a must read for anyone interested in the continuing saga of Eastern Europe for it sensitises us to the daunting tasks of policy makers in the region.

One wishes the author's scenario had been expanded to the Balkan regimes as well. It would have helped if the regional variations of transition had been focused on in greater detail. However, in this age of sequels and reruns one can always expect a Part Two in the offing to take care of such slips.

Santyayani Gupta is Deputy Accountant General in New Delhi. She contributes regularly to the History journal of Calcutta University.

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Melding Personal Glimpses With Public Issues

A.N.D. Haksar

PROFILES AND LETTERS

By K. Natwar Singh

Sterling Publishers, 1998, pp. 260, Rs. 350.00

MY SOUTH BLOCK YEARS

By J.N. Dixit

UBS Publishers & Distributors, 1998, pp. 485, Rs. 395.00

These two books under review are very different in style and content, yet their authors have much in common. Both have spent most of their working lives as career diplomats. Both achieved exceptional success in this esoteric profession, holding high and important offices at home and abroad. And, after leaving the Indian Foreign Service, both have remained actively involved with international affairs, one as a politician, and the other as a commentator.

This common background gives a similarly informed dimension to the two books. Both authors have had long exposures to the outside world, to global trends and events, and to foreign elites and ideas. The gap of five years separating them in age and service life was short enough for their experience to cover broadly the same kind of people and situations. The positions they held moreover enabled them to gain some of this experience at the highest level.

J.N. Dixit capped his official career by becoming the Foreign Secretary under Narasimha Rao. Natwar Singh left the bureaucracy for politics while a secretary in the External Affairs Ministry under Indira Gandhi, and became Minister of State for Foreign Affairs under Rajiv Gandhi. Both have thus witnessed at close quarters the shaping of India's foreign policy and the personalities involved in that process. Both also held at different times the crucial post of Indian Ambassador to Pakistan. Their mutual interaction cannot be gauged from these books, for neither mentions the other. Nevertheless their views bear juxtaposition because of their commonalities.

Dixit's book is a personal account of his stint of over two years as the Foreign Secretary. Some earlier incumbents of this key office have also published their memoirs, notably S. Dutt, C.S. Jha, Y.D. Gundevia and T.N. Kaul. Though insightful, these were either written later in life or dealt with other aspects also. Dixit's work is more focussed. Written less than three years after he demitted office, it also provides a detailed and systematic analysis of the conduct of Indian foreign policy during the period covered. As such it will be an informative source for students of India's international affairs, as well as officials dealing with them, at least for some time.

Given the country's current preoccupations in the post Pokhran II situation, the views expressed by Dixit well before this event occurred are of topical interest. He writes that towards the end of his tour in Pakistan in 1991, he "was getting more and more convinced that India should shed its ambiguity about acquiring nuclear weapons status." However "Rao remained ambiguous on developing options which we possessed, which was not a judicious stand." As for Pakistan, it had "been assiduously heightening subcontinental tensions to justfy and rationalize its nuclear weapons programme." It had even assured "other South Asian countries that its becoming a nuclear weapons power will provide a security umbrella for them against Indian hegemony."

Dixit's views on Pakistani intentions towards India are plainly put. "Pakistan's policies of fragmenting India are not concentrated in Kashmir alone. Pakistan's intelligence agencies have been actively engaged in encouraging ethno-religious and linguistic fissiparous tendencies in India, stretching from Punjab, through central and south India, right up to the North Eastern states." Comparing Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, the two Pakistani Prime Ministers he dealt with, he says that the former was more impulsive and aggressive. Nawaz Sharif "was a comparatively patient and covert player of the game of maintaining hostle relations with India." Finally, "Pakistan is a negative factor which adversely affects our regional policies...this is the reality which we cannot, and should not, wish away."

Natwar Singh is more general but no less forthright in his views on Pakistan. "The Pakistani psyche," he writes, "is obsessed with India. Kashmir has been utilized to divert attention from acute domestic problems." He adds that "the 1971 war had left a wound that would take long to heal," but desists from other comment because, "as a former Indian Ambassador to Pakistan I have a lifelong responsibility to avoid becoming irresponsible."

Singh's book is a collection of sketches of ten famous personalities he has known and corresponded with over the years, and features select quotations from their letters to him. Though not strictly speaking a diplomatic memoir, it is close enough to that categorization for two reasons. Firstly, apart from the legendary British writer E.M. Forster whom he first met while a student, Singh came to know the other personages only in the course of his diplomatic career. Secondly, his descriptions of their relations with him are also autobiographical.

Of the celebrities profiled by Singh, the two most interesting for the general reader will doubtless be Indira Gandhi and Zia-ul-Haq. The former was, in the author's words, "my benign patron," a relationship which lasted for nearly twenty years till her death. With the latter, he says he "established a comfortable working relationship," as President Zia knew "he had direct access to Indira Gandhi.

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It is difficult to imagine two contemporary and neighbouring leaders as dissimilar as Indira Gandhi and Zia-ul-Haq. Yet both were all powerful in their domains, and all wielders of such power exude a similar aura, unless it springs from some ultramundane source. Singh describes it in remarkably similar language in both cases.

Of Indira Gandhi he writes: "Long years with her had taught me that it was unwise to trifle with her will. No one took any liberties with her... She drew a sharp line between the personal and the public, the formal and the informal." And of Zia: "Conversations and discussions between Heads of State and Ambassadors can never be on terms of equality... the line dividing the formal and the informal, the casual and the ceremonial, was clearly drawn by both sides." The formal and the informal however overlap in another remarkable profile, that of the eminent overseas Chinese writer Han Suyin, whose letters to Singh show a warm personal equation with candid comments on policy. In one of them she urges him "to make your government see that the Chinese have no intention of using Pakistan against India. You know that Chou En Lai never envisaged this." In another, "one thing I would suggest is, NOT, for your own sake, always to lump Pakistan with China." Though over fifteen years old, these comments are again of topical interest.

The direction of India-China relations in more recent years is described at length by Dixit. He writes that when Narasimha Rao informed the then Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng about Pakistan's role in Kashmir, the latter's response was impartial. "Neither did he refer to the close relations between China and Pakistan, nor did he adopt the generally pro-Pakistan stance which the Chinese normally did." Dixit opines that "India's relations with China have reached a somewhat inactive plateau," and a constructive policy needs to be continued.

Singh's racy style, melding personal glimpses and public issues with lively anecdotes about famous people, makes for enjoyable reading. Dixit, in his own words, "is not too anecdotal," but his country and issue-specific descriptions are eloquent and absorbing. Both are prolific writers with several books to the credit of each. Hopefully more will follow.

A.N.D. Haksar, a former diplomat, has translated several works from Sanskrit into English, the latest among them Hitopadesa *(Penguin, 1998).*

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Illumining the Shadowy Corridors of International Relations

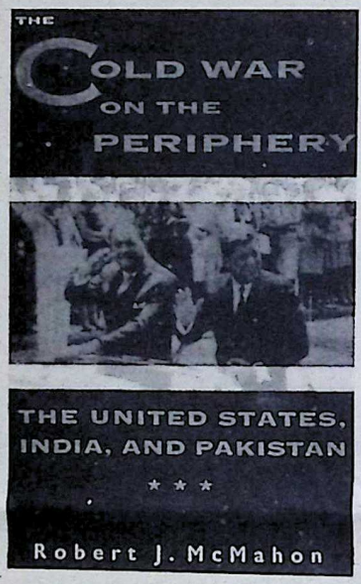
P.R. Chari

THE COLD WAR ON THE PERIPHERY: THE UNITED STATES, INDIA AND PAKISTAN

By Robert J. Mcmahon

Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, pp. xiv + 431, price not mentiond.

This is a major study of the US role in South Asia during 1947–1965. That period comprised the American presidentships of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy (tragically shortened) and Lyndon Johnson; the Prime Ministerships of Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri in India; and the presidentships of Jinnah, Liaquat Ali, a clutch of short-term civilian heads of government, and General Ayub Khan in Pakistan. Two questions now arise.



First, why does this diplomatic history abruptly end in 1965? The success of the Soviet Union in 1966 in brokering the Tashkent Agreement after the second Indo-Pak war of 1965 signalled an outstanding failure of American foreign policy. US thinking about South Asia came full circle. Beginning with indifference towards this region in 1947, the United States became greatly immersed thereafter with its baffling complexities. The choice of alignment lay between India, which in politico-ideological terms represented "the Third World's most prominent neutralist State", and Pakistan, but "largely for military-strategic reasons stemming from its proximity both to the Soviet Union and the Middle East". Eisenhower definitively exercised that choice in favour of Pakistan when the US concluded a mutual security pact with it in 1954.

Second, and to explain this sub-optimal—almost unnatural—choice, the author explores the external environment then confronting the United States; the major internal developments in South Asia; Indo-Pak conflictual relations since their birth; and the role of important extra-regional actors like the UK, Soviet Union and China. A significant conclusion of this study is: "Analyzed dispassionately and with the benefit of hindsight, the American alliance with Pakistan appears a monumental strategic blunder". Apropos: "It drained U.S. resources, provided Washington with little return on its sizeable investment, bound the United States awkwardly to the fate of one of the Third World's most troubled and least stable nations and made Pakistan dependent on the largesse of a distant and not always reliable superpower for its national survival". US support to Pakistan, incidentally, encouraged its intransigence on the Kashmir issue, which steadily became intractable. However, India was forced, in consequence, to increase its defence expenditure and adopt a diplomatic counter-strategy by forging closer ties with the Soviet Union. Thereafter, US relations with the two South Asian adversaries soon acquired the attributes of a zero-sum game.

Musing over the tantalizing counterfactual of history, the author speculates that a strong Indo-American cooperative relationship might have yielded greater political dividends to the United States. Even a policy of "careful evenhandedness" and "strict impartiality" would have better suited US geopolitical interests in South Asia by insulating the United States from "becoming the central player in a self-defeating regional arms race". These two other available options were rejected by the US administration in favour of the third choice of a politico-military alignment with Pakistan. Why? The author correctly notes that the United States was then being driven by its irrational fears of international Communism, and that a "domino effect" could shrink the area comprising the "free world". Consequently, a primordial sense of insecurity shaped American policies towards South Asia, and introduced Cold War dynamics into this region that was of peripheral interest to superpower rivalry in those years.

Taken in their historical sweep a cyclical pattern of active interest and benign neglect illustrates the American engagement with South Asia. The Indo-Pak war of 1965 was followed by the US's limited disengagement from the region. A fresh engagement with Pakistan occurred in 1971 after it facilitated the US opening to China. This re-engagement was greatly fortified by the Soviet lurch into Afghanistan in 1979, which led to the elevation of Pakistan into a strategic ally of the United States to confront the Soviet advance towards the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. Currently, the US has come to the realization that Pakistan's real problems are internal, and relate to its parlous political and economic situation. The influential Council on Foreign Relations Report has gone to the extent of pronouncing Pakistan to be a "failed" State. Whether the nuclear tests conducted by India constitute fresh reasons for the United States to revive its flagging interests in Pakistan and dilute its growing relations with India is a conundrum that the US must ponder over, and shortly resolve.

This is one of the finest books yet written on US relations with India and Pakistan. It presents many unusual insights based on painstaking archival research. What requires especial commendation is the author's graceful prose, which also has the virtue of being precise and lucid. Perhaps a historian's vision is desperately needed to illumine the shadowy corridors of international relations.

P.R. Chari is Co-Director, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.

Education as an Instrument of Social Change

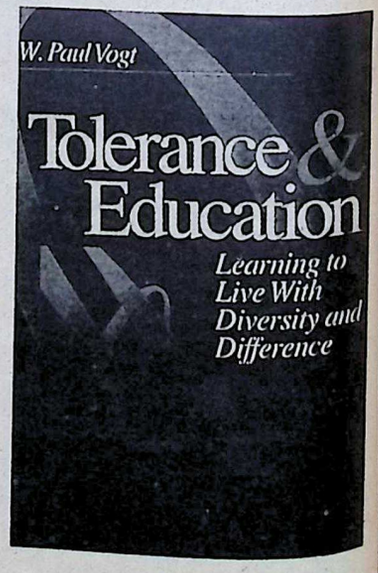
Karuna Chanana

TOLERANCE AND EDUCATION: LEARNING TO LIVE WITH DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

By W. Paul Vogt

Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 1997, pp. i-xxiii + 289, $46.00

The book under review bridges the gap between theory and practice. In the author's words, his 'main theoretical aim was to determine whether education fosters tolerance... and how it is learned in schools and colleges.' The practical aim was to look for concrete guidelines about how to teach tolerance. Vogt contends that in comparison with values of altruism, universalism, caring and understanding of others, tolerance does not receive so much attention and is minimal and, therefore, crucial. According to him, it is the first step toward civility.



The book falls within the broad framework of modernization and education, in general, and the relationship between formal education or schooling and change in values and attitudes, in particular. In other words, it is based on the premise that education can be an instrument of social change at the societal and individual level.

The book draws heavily upon direct and indirect evidence of research from across varied disciplines. Therefore, it is basically a process of synthesising the outcomes of micro-researches or secondary source material. Vogt pre-

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sents qualitative as well as quantitative evidence to substantiate the positive associations between tolerance and education and the magnitude of the correlations.

The book is spread over seven chapters. Chapter one defines tolerance and provides a brief historical review. Chapter two strives to answer the question: should we teach tolerance? While conceding that the answer is problematic, he gives three reasons for teaching tolerance. These are (i) for promoting diversity and equality, (ii) for interpersonal skills in pluralistic and egalitarian societies, and (iii) because tolerance stands on the border between positive and negative relations between people.

Chapter three is addressed to the question: is tolerance learned, especially in schools? On the basis of cross-national and intra-national evidence, he answers the question in the affirmative. The most important predictors are education, age and religious orientation. In addition, certain personality characteristics such as commitment to democratic values, feelings of threat and self-esteem, are also very strong predictors of tolerance and these, in turn, are influenced by education.

Chapters four and five present indirect and direct evidence of the association between tolerance and schooling. Direct attempts to teach tolerance are made through new curricula or through manipulation of social environment (through desegregation in USA and reservations in India). The evidence in favour of the former i.e. direct instruction is discouraging while the effect of social contact is encouraging.

Chapter six presents the implications of evidence for policy and practice. While conceding that causes and correlates of the association between tolerance and education are complex, Vogt believes that it is possible to provide guidelines for educational policy and practice.

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The last chapter focusses on research and how it can help convert tolerance as a goal to a set of achievable educational objectives. Thus, this chapter offers conclusions in order to organize further research and thereby to help design schooling to promote tolerance.

Inspite of the complexity of the task, Vogt defines tolerance as it 'often involves support for the rights and liberties of others, others whom one dislikes.... Self-control is a key component of tolerance.' The opposite of tolerance, according to Vogt, is discrimination, not prejudice. Tolerance is more of a behaviourial disposition while prejudice is a feeling. Tolerance is the lowest acceptable level of group harmony.

He identifies three overlapping but distinct categories of tolerance defined by its objects i.e. the toleratees. These categories are political, social and moral. Political tolerance, he contends, is the easiest to define. Social tolerance relates to ascriptive criteria as in apartheid or in untouchability. Yet the line between social and political tolerance is very thin. The activities in the private or moral realm are the most contested in the political arena such as gay rights and abortion. He concludes that the influence of education on all three types of tolerance, though not large, in unmistakable. Education increases tolerance and reduces prejudice and stereotyping of political, social and moral groups.

He identifies four forms or processes of learning in which schooling may promote tolerance. These four ways are not mutually exclusive. These are: (i) personality development, (ii) cognitive development, (iii) intergroup contact, and (iv) civil, moral and multicultural instruction. He also talks of inbuilt contradictions such as ethnic pride, which is central to multicultural education, being contrary to universalism. According to Vogt, these four theories or processes explain the correlations between tolerance and education under the right circumstances and with the necessary political will.

Vogt locates his discussion in the context of functionalism and conflict theory. Although he agrees that his work falls more in the realm of functionalism yet he is reluctant to be labelled so narrowly because like Simmel and Coser he believes that 'conflict can be functional'. Those who criticize functionalism have two main arguments. First, that democracy is a trick to keep the oppressed from turning revolutionary. Second, tolerance and democracy may be fine for prosperous societies but are luxuries for the poor societies, more so for the poor in these societies, who cannot appreciate civil liberties on hungry stomachs.

To counter these arguments, Vogt depends on the works of Amartya Sen and Partho Das Gupta, who are not eurocentric and who have provided sufficient evidence that famine and disease are less frequent in democratic societies. Therefore, he argues that democracy, rights, liberties and tolerance are good for societies as a whole and for people in them, including the poor. He says that conflict theorists may oppose particular forms of democracy, yet there is overwhelming evidence to show that civil liberties have a positive relationship with democracy which is desirable for promotion of tolerance and other similar values.

According to Vogt there are hundreds of paths from education to tolerance and the trick is to choose the right one for the right problem. Each one of us will be concerned with a specific problem, and therefore one needs to 'satisfice' not optimize because there is no one best solution for all problems. Vogt contends that he has provided a large body of knowledge organized or indexed into 'chunks' which can be used for specific problems.

The author's main focus is the American society and the researches used by him are eurocentric, yet the book will be of use to those who are interested in using education as an instrument of inculcating values of equality, human rights, peace, diversity, etc. because each of these presupposes a level of tolerance of difference.

He contends that academic tracking leads to ethnic and social class segmentation. The school system, especially the elite private schools in India, needs to look closely at such evidence where academic tracking has become a common practice.

This book covers a vast resource of researches and covers issues of race, ethnicity and multiculturalism. It also raises issues which fall in the realm of sociology of knowledge and curriculum formulation. In addition, the practitioners of the art of teaching value-education will find it of immense help. Whether one agrees with his reinterpretation of the analyses of secondary source material is a moot question. The point is that he has been able to unravel several of the complexities of the problem under discussion.

There are several parallels with the Indian situation especially the policy of reservations and its implications for the process of schooling and inculcating values of tolerance. If we wish to live with diversity and difference, the data presented herein may provide a direction as to whether schooling can achieve the tasks set for it or not. It also forewarns the educationists of the weaknesses of such a perspective. The limitations of schooling as well as strengths are brought out cogently.

The author's main focus is the American society and the researches used by him are eurocentric, yet the book will be of use to those who are interested in using education as a instrument of inculcating values of equality, human rights, peace, diversity, etc. because each of these presupposes a level of tolerance of difference.

Race and racism, ethnicity and ethnocentrism, class, multicultural education, desegregation, discrimination, bias, prejudice and sterotype are given a lot of space because these are at the core of diversity and difference. What is surprising is that gender differences hardly find any place. Even Carol Gilligan's work has been interpreted in a manner to suit his argument. He misses the main point in Gilligan's work that the very definition and the components of moral development or moral education or cognitive development would have to be reworked if women's experience and perspective were to be incorporated. The non-recognition of gender as a parametre along with class, race and ethnicity raises the question: What kind of diversity and difference is Vogt talking about? What kind of tolerance? Does mainstream social science in the U.S. ignore gender even at the end of the twentieth century?

Yet I would not like to undermine the contribution of this book which has vast theoretical as well as practical significance. A book dealing with tolerance, diversity and difference in a world ridden with conflict and violence offers endless opportunities for the practitioners of the art of schooling.

Karuna Chanana is Professor, Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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Important Work, Indifferently Executed

S. Shukla

FIFTH SURVEY OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (1988–92): TREND REPORTS

National Council of Educational Research and Training

Delhi , 1997, pp. xii + 735, price not stated.

It was as well that from the Third *Survey* (NCERT 1978/83), this work was institutionalized and hopefully will continue in future as well. For it was, as it were a purely extra-departmental exercise in the *Second*, after the late M.B. Buch had started the *First* at the Centre of Advanced Study of Education at M.S. University, Baroda. It has served as guide to research scholars for commencing their own work. The psychologist Director of NCERT, the late Professor Shib Mitra, broadened the disciplinary base of these surveys by including scholars from other desciplines among authors and editorial board. This practice has been continued in this fifth quinquennial effort. That is some advance over the pioneering effort of the late J.P. Naik who, even as he joined the Ministry of Education as Adviser for elementary education in the sixties started documenting Ph. D. theses in Education, which naturally did not extend to other areas, across disciplinary boundaries. For, Naik learnt the worth and use of social sciences in later capacities such as Member-Secretary, Education Commission (1964–66) and, Founder Member-Secretary, Indian Council of Social Science Research.

The present volume continues in the traditions so formed though with a bigger time-lag. It continues (a) to count some distinguished social scientists among its authors and on the editorial board but also (b) some of the original deficiencies of its predecessors which were sought to be corrected somewhat in the *Third* and *Fourth Surveys*. As always, it uses Ph. D. scholars' summaries of their theses as the material on which authors of the surveys write their chapters. This misses out sometimes on more significant findings both of the theses, and elsewhere. One has to recognize, too, of course, that it would be difficult to get anyone to go into all the material dispersed all over the country. But apparently, somehow the very range of the material itself has been a little thin this time and it has perhaps been avoidably and, in fact unnecessarily, perhaps even artificially split into may more chapters. Thus the distinguished social anthropologist Sachchidananda has had to rely on thirty-one summaries only and do without some of the material now spread out to chapters on scheduled castes, minorities etc., for the chapter on sociology of education. A small number of studies have in his chapters had to be rather fully summarized and a less than complete view of sociology of education is available. The late B.N. Mukherji who did important psychometric work at the Council for Social Development at Delhi and later at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta has, as member of the editorial board as well as author of the chapter in educational psychology made a contribution which stands out but hardly bears the mark of stature of the author. P.R. Panchmukhi uses thirty entries for the chapter on economics of education and Gulistan Kerawalla for comparative education only fifteen in the latter case, definitely more material is available in other chapters although, as she indicates, the interest in this important area is not very widespread, decadal numbers of theses being (1941–76 nil; 1971–80, 36; 1981–90, 74 and 1991–2, 4), all rather loosely comparative.

The chapter on womens' studies is, understandably, a recent entry. Usha Nayar's work here does give a view of some the pedagogical work on women's education but misses out entirely on the feminist flavour of much other work in recent decades. All of this when well-known sociologists such as Karuna Chanana and Suma Chitnis figure on the editorial board! The inadequacy arising from relying on doctoral theses, largely from education departments only (though there are some from other fields) is illustrated here vividly by there being no mention of, for instance, the educational insights in Malavika Karlekar's *Voices from Within* (1991), Krishna Kumar's *What is Worth Teaching*? is similarly not brought to attention in the chapter on curriculum studies.

The foregoing somewhat negative appraisal arises from this author's unhappiness that the *Survey* continues to bear its birthmarks rather heavily and, in addition, has perhaps overdivided the field into 40 odd area chapters which will tend to guide the fresh research scholar into even more narrow visions of his work. For, as it is, the ready availability of the *Surveys* had, while introducing him/her into the subject, tended to limit the view and possibly inhibit going into much original social science and pedagogical work of our own country. Contrasting this with the earlier work, for instance, on sociology of education by Suma Chitnis for the First Research Survey of Sociology organized by the Indian Council of Social Science Research or the virtually single-handed work on documenting research on Scheduled Castes by Nirmal Malhotra which was reviewed in these columns some time back, one begins to wonder if individuals or institutions are better for some things.

On the other hand, one should be grateful for what one has, which gives one *some* idea of what is being done mainly in the departments of education in our universities. One waits anticipating what the subsequent volume (s) will bring. It is not mentioned anywhere in this volume, which appears both comprehensive and self-contained with its forty odd chapters. And in any case one must supplement this what ICSSR *Surveys*, hopefully, continue to carry.

S. Shukla has been dean, faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia and Delhi University.

Locating Public Administration In A Broader Framework

K.S. Subramanian

DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Edited by Kuldeep Mathur

Sage Publications, Delhi, 1996, pp. 306, Rs. 325.00

The perception of the role of the state in development and regulation has undergone a drastic change in India since the initiation of the economic policy reform in 1991. The essays in this volume are addressed to this changing context. The editor of the volume, a former Professor of Public Administration in the IIPA, New Delhi, seeks to place the wide concerns articulated by the authors in the somewhat limited and limiting context of public administration studies in India, thus perhaps unwittingly detracting from the merit of the presentations.

It is no doubt true that the theoretical methods used by public administration specialists have failed to provide useful insights into the nature of the development process, distinguished exceptions notwithstanding. Given this background of theoretical dissatisfaction, Mathur rightly advocates the locating of public administration studies in the broader socio-political and economic context and rejects the notion of a separation between administration and politics. The approach, according to Mathur, should be to include issues in the wider realm of politics, policies and governmental structures. However, this seems to negate the need for the very existence of a separate discipline called public administration.

The volume contains substantive essays, among others, by Ajit Mozoomdar on the rise and decline of development planning in India; Tushaar Shah on agriculture and rural development in the 1990s; David Potter on the Prime Minister and the bureaucracy; Kuldeep Mathur on designing poverty alleviation programmes; Neil Webster on Panchayati Raj in West Bengal and Nirmal Mukarji on district governance.

Only an insider to the system, such as Ajit Mozoomdar, can provide such an insightful analysis of the rise and

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The volume contains substantive essays, among others, by Ajit Mozoomdar on the rise and decline of development planning in India; Tushaar Shah on agriculture and rural development in the 1990s; David Potter on the Prime Minister and the bureaucracy; Kuldeep Mathur on designing poverty alleviation programmes; Neil Webster on Panchayati Raj in West Bengal and Nirmal Mukarji on district governance.

decline of development planning in India. In the longest essay of the volume, he touches on the development perspective, politics and planning, machinery of planning, policy analysis, planning models, policy instruments, federalism and planning, and the present status and future relevance of planning. He concludes that the infirmities in Indian development planning have arisen more from a diminishing national consensus on development goals than from deficiencies in the planning system. A shift in the balance of political forces can reverse the trend and a new consensus built on the basis of well-defined priorities. As of now, the Planning Commission no longer enjoys the status and authority it had upto the mid-seventies.

Tushaar Shah in a well argued and comprehensive assessment of the agricultural and rural development scene calls for a recasting of the relationship between the state and the institutions of economic development—the legal framework, markets and economic organizations in the private, public, cooperative and informal markets. Political analysis of the factors which stand in the way of such recasting do not receive his attention.

David Potter shows how India's bureaucracy has been profoundly marked by the ICS tradition of administration, a theme explored by him in a full-length study published in 1986. He illuminates his arguments by a meticulous analysis (not included in his earlier study) of Nehru's fortnightly letters to Chief Ministers, which show how the ICS tradition prospered during the Nehru era although Nehru was never reconciled to it. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi carried the process forward. Potter, however, feels that the ICS tradition is under serious threat in the 1990's, arising mainly from the challenge of the other services in the bureaucracy, and the declining political support for the IAS as democracy spreads among India's lower classes. This may possibly lead to the dismantling of the colonial framework within India's post-colonial bureaucracy. Mathur's useful essay carries forward the analysis of political and social forces and shows how they have weakened the effort to achieve the goal of poverty eradication in India.

Webster examines the functioning of Panchayati Raj in a district in West Bengal during the period before the new act came into force. The CPM-led front in West Bengal has ensured that elections have been held regularly and panchayats given increased significance in local planning and implementation of development programmes. This political commitment is analyzed to examine the actual performance of these institutions with regard to mobilizing popular participation and its impact.

Mukarji, a retired ICS Officer turned scholar proposes decentralization of governance at the district level and considers decentralizing some functions like planning as inadequate. He makes a plea for extending the two-tiered federal system to a three-tiered one in which the district will have powers granted by the Constitution. This would demand entirely different structural arrangements at the district level including a reformulation of panchayat institutions.

This volume constitutes an important effort to link up the study of administrative structures to development politics and processes in India, and to promote a wider understanding of the nature of changes under way in Indian society.

K.S. Subramanian is Senior Fellow at the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi.

New From

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

COLONIAL FANTASIES
Towards a feminist reading of Orientalism

MEYDA YEGENOGLU

Meyda Yegenoglu investigates the intersection between post-colonial theory and feminist criticism, focussing on the Western fascination with the veiled women of the Orient. She examines the veil as a site of fantasy and nationalist ideologies and discourses of gender identity, analyzing travel literature, anthropological and literary texts to reveal the hegemonic, colonial identity of the desire to penetrate the veiled surface of 'otherness'. Representations of cultural difference and sexual difference are shown to be inextricably linked, and the figure of the Oriental woman to have functioned as the veiled interior of Western identity.

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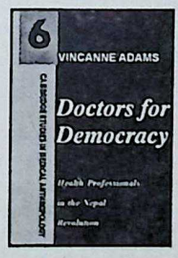
DOCTORS FOR DEMOCRACY
Health Professionals in the Nepal Revolution

VINCANNE ADAMS



This book examines the role of the Nepali physicians in the revolutionary changes in 1990. These doctors are trained in the Western tradition, and participate in international scientific debates, yet they have always been concerned to develop a form of medical practice that was relevant to Nepali conditions, and which could speak to local conceptions about health, and so their medical practice was always politicized. Vincanne Adams argues that the commitment of these professionals to the values of science, and to public health, was crucial in their political activity, and that ideas and practices associated with the notions of 'democracy' and of 'science' supported each other..

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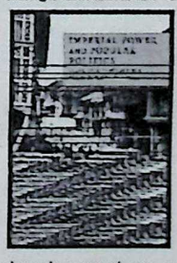
IMPERIAL POWER AND POPULAR POLITICS
Class, Resistance and the State in India, c 1850-1950

RAJNARAYAN CHANDAVARKAR



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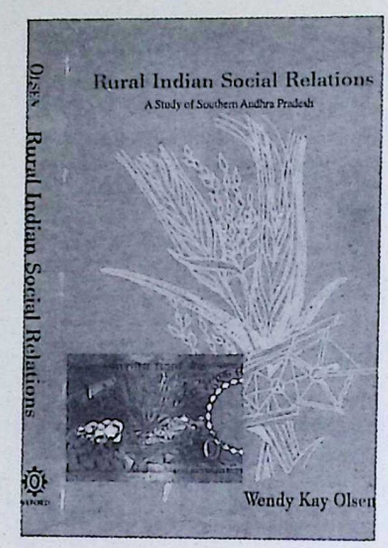
Not By Bread Alone

R. Rajamani

RURAL INDIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS: A STUDY OF SOUTHERN ANDHRA PRADESH

By Wendy Kay Olsen

Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 345, Rs. 595.00



The title of the book and the background of the author who is a Lecturer in Social Research Skills in the Universities of Salford and Lancaster in U.K., do not prepare us fully for the contents of this book. The methodology and narration has a distinct social research flavour, but beyond that one gets into a scholarly treatise on economic and exchange relations in two villages of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh. The study has concentrated on the measurement of economic variables except income, as there was a problem in collecting even crude data on income. As the author puts it candidly, 'business and trading activity, where monetised inputs and outputs and profits would be known to respondents, is precisely the area where people in the study villages were most reluctant to divulge details.' This limitation has not come in the way of an excellent analysis of food policies and the marketing of paddy and rice both at the macro(State) level and micro-(village) level, State and local groundnut market structure, credit relations, borrowing and saving in the study area and interlinkages in local exchange relations. The analysis is rooted in some painstaking data collection spread over 98 tables (of which 82 are in the main text) and 23 figures. The methods are quite empirical within the limitations described.

The book starts as a study of rural exchange relations in southern Andhra Pradesh in the years 1986–87. The focus was to be on distress sales but the study led to a wider coverage of exchange relations per se and the process of exploitation that may be implicit in them. It also includes comments on the structure of property ownership and the control or management of labour. In the process, the author does justice to the title of the book, giving a materialist explanation of the social change, particularly in exchange relations.

The scheme of the book proceeds on the basis of a theoretical exposition on the phenomenon of distress sales. Two major frameworks are mentioned i.e., the Marxist and the neoclassical analysis: the author deals extensively with Bhaduri's views about the semi-feudal mode of production as also Bharadwaj's treatment of the role of commerce vis-a-vis production. The neoclassical work comes in handy in dealing with the analysis of the credit market. Yet this framework, according to the author, has not been hamstrung, as more reliance is placed on primary fieldwork comprising both interviews and personal experiences. Two relatively remote dryland villages in the drought affected area of Rayalaseema were chosen for the study as perhaps there would be a greater propensity for distress sales in such villages. Apart from the topography and other details of the villages, the class and caste structure in the villages has been dealt with. The villages had a high number of landless and landed workers, smaller numbers of farmers and capitalist landlords whose numbers along with merchants, artisans and others (including salaried classes) was marginally higher than the workers in one village and marginally less in the other village. An emphatic statement is made at the beginning about the enormous economic inequality in the study area. Gold holdings is used as one indicator, showing the amounts owned varied by a factor of over 150 from the poorest to the richest class. The skewed distribution of wealth is also seen as a major factor impeding growth of agricultural productivity and incomes.

The background to the field work also covers experience of subsistence amid cash cropping. An important finding is that the study area does not subsist on its own food and very few households produce all their food. However surplus food is produced and marketed. Also covered are aspects of commercialisation including sale of output, purchase of food and consumer goods, purchase of inputs, hire of labour, wage-earnings and reinvestment of profits in production. A profile of crops grown is given where paddy and groundnut dominated with some grams and coarse millets like ragi being pushed to the back over the years as groundnut expanded.

The twists and turns of State policies on food are described briefly. The inherent contradictions in remunerative food grains prices to farmers along with reasonable prices for consumers (especially the organized labour in urban areas) are highlighted. The noncoverage of millets in the procurement supply chain is also mentioned in passing. Much more analysis is made of the grain trade policies of the State Government of Andhra Pradesh, especially the scheme introduced in 1983–88, popularly known as 'Rs. 2 a kilo of rice' scheme, which involved the procurement of rice from mils in the coastal districts and subsidised distribution throughout the State. In the study area fair price shops had been opened. As far as local paddy production was concerned, it has been observed that there was price seasonality. The seasonality however, was moderate for coarse paddy, perhaps because this variety figures in the procurement and distribution mechanism of the State. In the finer varieties, however seasonality was more. Expectations of drought heightened this trend. Changes in Chinnagutti or the hybrid JL 24 variety having a high oil content which makes them marketable. The study showed that the irregularity noticed in the markets in groundnut prices was not greater than for paddy or rice. The fluctuations in groundnut prices were more due to government import policy in respect of edible oils and also on the timing of the rains. Unlike paddy, which was a cash crop of the rich, and food crop for many, groundnut was uniformly the cash crop for all. A discussion of the storage and sales of groundnut showed that there was capacity to store in all sections, but the smaller farmers sold at low post-harvest prices because of economic constraints. On the other hand, the richer cultivators had more quantity stored and reaped large seasonal profits on groundnut as they did with paddy.

Credit relations too, are studied in depth. Malcolm Darling's Punjab peasant was born, lived and died in debt. This model of the cycle of indebtedness and the policy interventions by the State and the banking system to break or moderate the extortionate grip of the moneylenders are described in brief as a theoretical framework. The author goes on to study borrowing and saving in the study villages. All the households were seen to borrow for different purposes. The total debt of an agrarian household rose from Rs. 2106 in December 1986 to Rs. 2793 in May 1987. The worker families also borrowed in kind. Loans were also taken pawning gold. The landless workers borrowed most in the hot season, the farmers in the growing season and the merchants at harvest time. Consumption loans which are not given by banks, are the largest segment. The profile of loans by the banks, one of which had a branch in one of the study villages, showed that lending to workers, artisans and salaried classes was only a small part of their outstanding debt. Intra-family lending, lending between families, lending by merchants, interest free loans—all these variations were also noticed.

Repayments of loans averaged only 34 percent of the principal amounts taken. The banks performed poorly in loan collection. An interesting finding that militates against the conventional image of the rapacious moneylender is that in 1986–87, which was the third year of below normal harvests, there were no foreclosures of loans. Another observation is that the growth of formal lending through banks has injected competition in the market and the reduction of the monopoly power of the moneylenders. Yet it did not help the smaller farmers out of the cycle of informal-sector debt and post-harvest sales.

Looking at the interlinkage of local exchange relations, the author draws two initial conclusions. One is that tied transactions are not necessarily more exploitative than the untied ones. Secondly, data also do not support a conclusion that linked contracts improve the operations of the markets. But combined with other factors like assets distribution and class structure, they do act as barriers to growth. The author concludes by referring to the need for

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even better methods of research and exploring gender relationships with a view to find more about how the social and power stratification is viewed.

Thus the egalitarian background of the author and the type of social and economic inequality in the study villages strongly determine some of the conclusions. 'Not by bread alone' but even more with 'equality' is the running theme. In this there is no place for Gandhiji's vision of villages as 'little republics', self-sufficient yet linked to the other 'republics' and trying to evolve norms of social equality and dignity and adding economic value in decentralised locations. An interesting subject like the effect on nutrition of the villagers as a result of going away from the nutritious ragi is touched upon but not developed. This analysis might have developed insights into future patterns of growth and distribution, impacting as it does on human health over a long period and through that on productivity, growth and redressal of inequalities. But absence of light on such issues cannot diminish the importance of the book as a dispassionate study of human and economic relations in an apparently stagnant rural society.

R. Rajamani is a retired civil servant who has worked on banking, rural development, technology and environmental issues.

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Rooted in Public Finance Theory

Indira Rajaraman

INCENTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN TAX ENFORCEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRY EXPERIENCE

By Arindam Das-Gupta and Dilip Mookherjee

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. xiv + 478, Rs. 675.00

India does not figure in the title of this book on enforcement of income taxation but is very clearly the central focus of concern, not surprisingly given that the authors Arindam Das-Gupta and Dilip Mookherjee, two of the finest economists in the world today, are of Indian origin, and given that repeated attempts at reform notwithstanding, the country remains a place where compliance with personal income taxation (the book does not by and large address the corporate income tax) is the exception rather than the rule.

This giant collective failure is addressed in the book centrally as an enforcement issue, with reform seen principally as calling for institutional correctives in tax administration. The authors deplore the absence in standard optimal tax theory of any attention to the enforcement constraint in developing countries. In what is one of the best contributions of the book, there is a succinct overview of optimal tax theory, and of the Allingham-Sandmo-Yitzhaki model of taxpayer compliance. But this examination leads the authors to conclude that the central need is for an analysis of "taxpayer compliance incentives, the effectiveness of tax administration, and the interplay between the two".

On the need for better tax administration, there can be no disagreement whatever. From an examination of data on the jurisdiction (ranges) of five District Commissioners of Income tax, the authors document the substantial variation in workload between and within the five ranges, and the astonishing lack of relationship between staff allocations and workload. Only 18% of the time of Field Inspectors, who are expected to act as the 'eyes and ears' on assessees falling within the jurisdiction of their Assessing Officers, is actually spared for field enquiries. These are merely two of the countless examples provided in the book of the tremendous scope for improvement in the functioning of tax administration in India.

The diversion of Field Inspectors from their primary function could however be just another symptom of a more fundamental problem afflicting tax administration in developing countries. There is no independent source of information on the basis of which economic activity as self-declared by the assessee can be verified. This in turn is because most business transactions in these countries are conducted in cash, by virtue of which no records are obtainable independently of those declared by the transacting parties. Even large transactions pertaining to sale of commercial real estate are routed if at all only partially through the banking system. This makes for a central vacuum in terms of the kind of formal information that only banking records can provide. Such a vacuum acts as a critical constraint on even the most well-intentioned and least corruptible elements within tax administration. Any suspicion of underreporting remains a suspicion, supported at best by circumstantial evidence, but never quantifiable in a manner that can withstand legal scrutiny. Informal information collected by Field Investigators on the scale of activity of an assessee cannot supersede that supplied by the assessee. Thus, if Field Inspectors are withdrawn from the field and placed on routine desk jobs, that may well be because of the known futility of persisting with field investigations.

The central problem with the compliance crisis in countries like India cannot therefore be enforcement failure alone in a setting where the degree of under-compliance, and indeed the very fact of non-compliance, is impossible to establish. In the standard tax compliance model, the probability, p, of the evasion being discovered and penalized cannot be substantially raised when the information base for such a discovery does not exist. No amount of refinement in the direction of endogenizing p to make it functionally dependent on the amount of concealed income can change the fundamental information constraint on p. The central problem in developing countries is the failure to take as a given the information constraint on enforcement, and to suit the design of income taxation to it. Enforcement in the developing world cannot be enhanced beyond a point to suit a design adapted to information availability in countries at a different stage of fiscal evolution.

The description of reforms in France, Canada and Spain provided in the book, while exceedingly interesting, is largely irrelevant. The French success with interactive minitels, for a harried tax administrator in the developing world, reads like science fiction. The teletransmission of tax through minitels is based on triangular communication between the assessee (either individual or corporate), the assessor and the *banking intermediary. Here again is* evidence, if evidence were needed, of the key role of the third party in completing the self-declaration route to income taxation.

An important distinction has to be made between the ability to assess potential tax payable for the economy in aggregate, and the ability to assess it for a particular assessee. The first is possible on the basis of macro data, although difficult to do. One of the major contributions of the book is the construction of a macro income-tax compliance index covering the period 1965–95. The admirably painstaking econometric exercise that seeks to establish the cause for this decline concludes that the explanatory factor is the falling frequency and efficiency of scrutiny assessment (tax audits, in U.S. parlance). A further

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cross-sectional exercise shows a positive correlation between the number of assessing officers and revenues. From these results the authors infer that an expansion in the number of assessing officers would enhance compliance incentives. This conclusion however assigns exogeneity to a variable that could just as easily be the endogenous response of a tax administration that has learned over time the information limits on scrutiny. Cross-sectional variations in assignment of assessing officers could also be an endogenous response to variations by occupation and jurisdiction in the information constraint.

It is the information constraint itself which needs to be addressed in both an occupation-specific manner, and more generally through computerization of records. This rather than enhancements of numbers of assessing officers is what is urgently needed. Singapore provides an example of a tax system that has achieved efficiency despite almost total neglect of tax audits, through an exclusive focus on information and the effective processing thereof. For countries like Singapore with access to independent sources of information, self-declaration is the least-cost option and clearly the sensible choice. For countries on the other side of the information divide, other tax systems have to be devised.

The need is for an alternative to self-declaration from which to compute the tax liability of a particular assessee. Developing countries have attempted to do this in two ways. One is by deducting tax at the point or source at which income is received (TDS). Philippines is an example of a system that has relied exclusively on widening the scope of tax withholding. The second is to assess potential income of the assessee on the basis of objectively observable and measurable indicators specific to his occupation or profession (presumptive methods). The authors do recognize the need for both, but see them as information adjuncts to better enforcement, rather than as alternative features of tax design. As a result, the book does not for example examine enforcement issues that arise in the administration of TDS itself. Had the authors bent their minds to this issue with the same care which they devote to non-TDS administration, they would undoubtedly have discovered extensive scope for improvement. A single minor procedural alteration in TDS administration introduced in 1987–88, whereby the responsibility for collecting non-salary TDS was concentrated under one head and separated from routine assessment of tax returns, raised the share of TDS in gross collections in a single year from 22% to 30%. There has been no change in administrative arrangements since then and correspondingly no change in the share of TDS until 1995–96, when a substantial widening of the TDS net led to a further rise in the TDS share to 35%.

TDS offers an alternative point of taxation. A move to an alternative base of taxation has proved rewarding in a number of developing countries and in a number of contexts. The lead provided by Francisco Gil Diaz in designing for Mexico a MAT on the corporate sector based on a presumptive rate of return to gross assets has been emulated elsewhere with considerable revenue success, although the authors are wrong when they describe the Indian MAT of *1996 as presumptive* (p. 440). There is no presumptive element whatever in the currently operative Indian MAT, which is merely a minimum tax on declared book profits. The Mexican levy itself is erroneously described thus: "The actual tax paid by a company in a year is the maximum of the asset tax and the corporate income tax due. Hence a company reporting a rate of return higher than 5.7 per cent would not incur any additional tax liability" (p. 311). That is incorrect. The Mexican tax requires payment in full of the corporate income tax, with the minimum tax (TRA) becoming payable only if corporate tax paid falls below the TRA.

The need for presumptive norms for effective taxation in the developing world is readily apparent when confronted with the four components of enforcement failure listed by the authors: the identification gap; the filing gap; the reporting gap; and the collection gap. The identification and filing gaps could be closed as the income tax authorities in India are now attempting to do with reference to six criteria (ownership/use of a telephone, motor vehicle, residential floor area above a specified minimum or a credit card; foreign travel; and membership of exclusive clubs). The declared aim is to double the number of filers by the year 2000. Aside from the issue of whether the increased workload can be handled by existing methods, it is clear that the closing of these gaps will be revenue-unproductive unless the critical reporting gap is closed. That in turn is impossible until the reporting gap is known. And the reporting gap in turn will be known only if there is some independent basis of determining tax liability. Australia is an example of a developed country where occupation-specific presumptive norms are used as benchmarks within a system based on self-declaration. The presumptive systems in Israel and elsewhere surely deserved greater and more updated attention. The occupation-specific tahshiv in Israel was phased out two decades ago on the recommendations of a tax reform committee which saw that system as primitive. The introduction of self-declaration saw a decline in revenue buoyancy. Recognizing the revenue rewards of primitivism, the use of presumption was re-introduced under an alternative name (tadrih).

The comprehensive survey of tax reform the world over leads the authors to identify computerization and attention to information technology as the dominant components. If this is so, more attention than one paragraph (p. 275) is called for on overcoming possible Luddite opposition. Computerization is needed no matter how income taxation is attempted, and is needed also in the sphere of indirect taxation especially if a VAT is contemplated. Indeed, one way by which income taxation through self-declaration can be made more effective is by using the VAT information base as a cross-check. The authors do not examine this although they do mention in passing the Bolivian VAT-supplementary income tax, an interesting formal link between income and indirect taxation whereby VAT paid by individuals can be credited against a 10% flat rate income tax. The motive behind its introduction was to plug VAT evasion.

Future directions for the improvement of the information base of income taxation in India must necessarily move in tandem with the information base developed for the move to a VAT. The conventional administration separation of income taxation from indirect taxation is no longer useful. Since such a merger of information systems is possible only with computers, the speed of computerization of tax administration is where future attention should critically be focused.

The very commendable contribution the book makes is to bring administrative issues to the forefront in a manner possible only when the authors are firmly rooted in the theory of public finance. For that reason, this book deserves to be widely read by students of public finance in addition of course to tax administrators and all those interested in issues of governance more generally.

Indira Rajaraman currently holds the Reserve Bank of India Chair at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. Prior to this, she was for eighteen years on the Faculty of the Indian Institute of Management at Bangalore.

Globalization and the Economy

S. Krishna Kumar

ON THE FALL AND RISE OF ECONOMIC LIBERALISM: THE MAKING OF THE ECONOMIC GULAG

By Frederic F. Clarimont

The Other India Press, 1997, pp. 350, Rs. 150.00

The Marshallian cross of demand and supply is ruling the roost in the circles of economic decision-making in the entire world cutting across the specificities of geographic boundaries. As is well known this is ample testimony to the hegemony achieved by neoliberalism, finance and free trade through the skilful manipulation of the international financial institutions, which has been made possible by a set of rich countries advocating the cause of finance and industry. Rather than the efficient Pareto-optimal outcome emerging from the market, through the working of the invisible hand, the world is currently witness to nations and currencies being in turmoil due to the power relationships operating in the forex markets. The currencies flowing from one part of the globe in a day far outstrips the total value of trade

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... this transition of economics from the classical political economy traditions, characterized by the primacy of space it gives to production to the neoclassical phase where exchange of all the existent commodities matters, has led to the depoliticizing of an important social science which is not without consequences.

in goods and services produced in a year, only revealing the gravity of speculation during the current period. It is not without reason that the mainstream textbook theories, which do not give due consideration to the dynamic power relationships found to operate in the global plane, are inadequate to provide an explanation for mass unemployment, poverty, deteriorating terms of trade and stagnant economic growth, which hovers over the world economy. As a matter of fact this transition of economics from the classical political economy traditions, characterized by the primacy of space it gives to production to the neoclassical phase where exchange of all the existent commodities matters, has led to the depoliticizing of an important social science which is not without consequences. After the brief Keynesian interregnum and the development planning episodes in the 1950s, the state-of-art in economic theory has been of the neoclassical fashion. The book under review is an attempt made in this regard towards bringing the tools of classical political economy in understanding the dynamics of the functioning of the world economy. It basically deals with the role of transnational corporations in the underdeveloped state of affairs prevailing in the LDCs.

It is indeed pertinent to note that the interventionist planning which carried with it the relevance of public intervention has brought an element of technology diffusion and creation of industrial base in countries like India and Brazil. But it should not be forgotten that the bipolar power structure in the globe in the post World War II scenario facilitated the flow of development aid into the less developed world. It goes without saying that without the overt support of the Soviet Union, the development planning in the Third World would have been a bitter failure. Nonetheless, the attempt made by the author to portray these episodes of limited intervention as the case of the demise of liberalism in the world affairs is too far-fetched an argument.

Not only that the net inflow of aid into the developing countries had fallen over years, but the sad fact remains that the non-interest bearing inflow has almost ceased. The extent to which the international financial institutions have been able to extend their tentacles over the less developed countries ever since the fissures in the Soviet Union and the eruption of the Mexican debt crisis i.e., in the decade of eighties and ninetles has been unprecedented. The integrated financial markets, thanks to the advancements in electronics and computers, has furthered the possibility of the spread of the financial contagion across boundaries in seconds. It was only recently that the world was witness to the revising of the growth estimates by the OECD countries in the wake of the Southeast Asian debacle. The probability of LDCs contracting cold in the wake of Europe sneezing is more real today than ever before.

At the same time while the deteriorating terms of trade of the primary commodities over time reduces the purchasing power of the inhabitants of the less developed world, ditching the poor peasants further into the whirlpool of indebtedness, it indirectly makes a way out for the developed world from the recession in which they are engulfed in, this being made possible through the reduction of the costs of the industrial raw materials which enters into the cost of production of the developed West. Nonetheless, Clairmont's argument that the golden age of capitalism was specifically due to the wars which were waged by US in Vietnam is indeed adulatory, with this probably the hi-tech discussion and applause about the wonder that is capitalism remains exposed. For military Keynesianism at the cost of the lives of developing world could better serve the mission of providing employment in the developed world, the subscription of the euthanasia of the rentier, as envisioned in Keynes' *General Theory* was not needed.

Country after country, notwithstanding the long run implications on the social indicators of living (well documented by Cornia, Jolly and Stewart) are subjected to the deflationary policies engendering reduction in the levels of real income. The post-colonial states in the developing world have been deprived of their powers of macro-economic policy decision making due to the powers that dominate the international financial institutions in the form of rentier and capitalist interests. Contrary to the widely held notions there has only been a marginal increase in the total inflow of direct foreign investment to the less developed world, moreover much of this has been to areas in and around East Asia, this would mean that the underpinnings of the international division of labour remains more or less the same. Limits to capital control are rarely in operation in the developing world. The LDCs seem to be at the mercy of a handful of foreign institutional investors. It is a drama in which Soros and Leeson are the main actors—an unfortunate management of the world economy by a group of finance managers.

Notwithstanding the decline in the per capita availability of foodgrains, the agriculture in the developing world is restructured to cater to the consumption of the developed world. Appropriately, as Baran puts it, what is cooked in the kitchen is not decided in the kitchen. Kenya now concentrates in the production of flowers to cater to the Holland market and India is all set to reorient towards the intensive production of fruits, vegetables and marine products. In the midst of abject poverty, in nexus with the warlords of Somalia, the rich marine produce is being fished out, by the fishing vessels of the United States. Indeed a disgrace, that Guinea Bissau was offered four times its GDP by Italy, if the former had entitled it an opportunity to dump it's nuclear waste, this is the vulgar extent of commodification unbounded. Ken Sarowiwa, for having articulated the demand of the Ogoni tribals for a just share of the oil revenues of the Dutch Shell Company in order to ameliorate their poverty, was decapitated by the military junta regime in Nigeria. Recently a Russian economist, Kotovsky observed that an outflow estimated of a minimum of $50 bn and a maximum of $400 bn from Russia in the early 1990s has been responsible for western Europe not sliding into a recession. It is therefore, not without reason, that we have a dominant group who have been consistently theorizing about the ideology of neoliberalism, globalization and privatization. These instances bespeak volumes of the alliance of the multinational buccaneer capital with the post colonial states in the developing world.

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The author, taking a dig at the much professed view of the gains of foreign investment asks, "What were the cumulative effects of international investments on the ryots in Bengal and Bihar, on the Chinese peasant in the Yangtze Valley, on the subsistence African, the Andean Indian, the Middle Eastern fellah, the Cuban landless labourer?" But the sad fact remains that much of his investigation is confined to the colonial period and not the post-colonial stage, which is expected in a book published in 1995. Of course, he makes some marginal comments on the relative performance of India vis-a-vis China in this regard, which by any yardstick of measure is too insufficient. The author seems to consider narrations on economic history of the colonial period as an end in itself, rather than taking a leaf out of it to contextualize the current scene. The author quotes Mossadueq who claims "the petrol industry has not bettered the life of the people of Iran by any means, despite 50 years of their presence in the country." (p. 298) This statement made in 1955 about the Anglo Iranian Oil Company in itself is of course relevant, but the author ends it there, without further exploring as to what the scene is currently in the Middle East. Despite the quadrupling of the oil prices in the 1970s, Saudi Arabia is on the verge of a balance of payment crisis, this is due to the prolific extravaganza of the members of the royal family on the import of luxurious commodities from abroad.

On the one hand, we have the inextricable links which the developing countries have with the international financial institutions which engender in them compulsions to pursue policies which give due position to the interests of capital as such, while on the other hand we have indirect attempts being made to relatively disempower governments vis-a-vis NGOs by devolving development aid, through these alternate channels. As a matter of fact, the end of the developmentalist state is the long run interest of finance capital. Though Clairmont's work has to a large extent done justice towards characterizing the political underpinnings of the economic operations in the colonial period, it has been a failure in conceptualizing the growing challenges of the state during the heyday of the dominance of transnational capital.

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Letter from London

Stephen Moss

A recent addition to the battery of UK literary prizes—sometimes it seems there are more awards for fiction in the UK than actual novels published—is the Orange Prize, which began life in 1996 with a blaze of publicity that has been repeated in the two years since. In such an overcrowded marketplace, to gain that level of attention and to have established itself in just three years is a remarkable achievement.

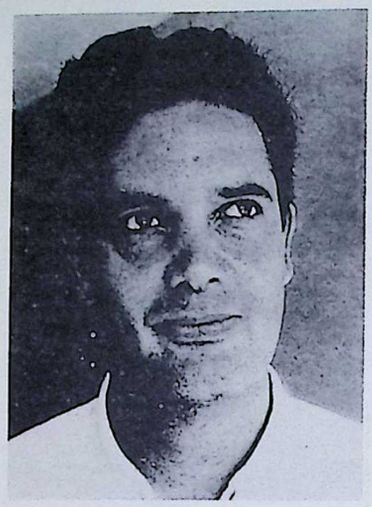
In what might loosely be called marketing terms, it has three key advantages.. First, excellent organisation which from the beginning has maximised news potential and made pioneering use of the internet and other media to generate public interest. Second, a prize of pounds 30,000, the biggest single award for a book in the UK. And third the fact that it is only open to women writers. That stipulation is, on the face of it, bizarre and there were plenty of critics back in 1996 who wrote the prize off as meaningless, perhaps even counter-productive to the cause of women's writing. A good writer is a good writer, regardless of gender, was the argument. Jane Austen, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf stand comparison with any male writer, and it is patronising to suggest that women can't compete with the best men. In some ways those critics had logic on their side—the best women do happily compete with men and win the big prizes; Arundhati Roy, Kate Atkinson and Pat Barker have all won major literary awards in the past few years. But the very controversy over a women-only prize, the furore it generated, was enough to get the Orange Prize off to a flying start and it is now firmly fixed in the literary calendar.

The arguments continue. Anita Brookner, a former Booker Prize winner, has in the past asked not to be considered for the award on the grounds that she does not believe in gender-specific judgments. This year Nadine Gordimer, whose book *The House Gun* would have stood a very good chance of at least being shortlisted, asked for it to be withdrawn on similar grounds. But the general verdict is that it creates interest in literary fiction and draws in new readers through its educational work, and the critics are now in a distinct minority.

The 1998 Orange Prize has just been awarded to the Canadian author Carol Shields, for her novel *Larry's Party* and this year a quite different controversy stirred up interest in the prize; the absence on the six-book shortlist of British writers. Of the six writers shortlisted, four were North American (Shields, Kirsten Bakis, Ann Patchett, Anita Shreve), and one Irish (Deirdre Purcell), leaving the UK with a partial claim on the other, Pauline Melville, who is Anglo-Guyanese. Some saw this as a disaster for British writing (North Americans were also in the ascendant last year, when the prize went to the Canadian Anne Michaels); others were more sanguine and insisted that the pendulum would swing and British writers would come to the fore.

The original arguments over the gender question perhaps obscured the truly interesting point about the Orange Prize, which is that, unlike the Booker and Whitbread Prizes, it allows entries from the US as well as Canada. UK and Commonwealth writers now have to compete with the literary leviathan of North America, and so far the battle has been pretty uneven. Last year, Lisa Jardine, one of the co-founders of the prize, accused British women writers of parochialism, of an obsession with

. . . Lisa Jardine, one of the co-founders of the [Orange] prize, accused British women writers of parochialism, of an obsession with self and a failure to see the bigger picture. Some linked that failure of the imagination to the success of *Bridget Jones's Diary*—the angst-ridden chronicle of a sex-and diet-obsessed thirty-something woman which began as a newspaper column, became a best-selling novel and will shortly be made into a film. Put bluntly, British women could write domestic dramas, ran the argument, but they couldn't do literature.



self and a failure to see the bigger picture. Some linked that failure of the imagination to the success of *Bridget Jones's Diary*—the angst-ridden chronicle of a sex-and diet-obsessed thirty-something woman which began as a newspaper column, became a best-selling novel and will shortly be made into a film. Put bluntly, British women could write domestic dramas, ran the argument, but they couldn't do literature.

That view is glib: there are good, ambitious British women writers around—Janice Galloway, Jeanette Winterson, Shena Mackay, A.L. Kennedy spring immediately to mind. But it does have some seed of truth: too many women are pushed by their publishers into writing relationship-obsessed "women's fiction", artless slice-of-life narratives that are the literary equivalent of soap operas. Moreover, compared with the North Americans, who have honed their skills on creative writing programmes and sometimes have teaching to back up their writing and allow them breaks from the fiction factory, British writers can seem naive. On the surface, *Larry's Party* is a funny, simple, touching book about a middle-aged man forced to reassess his life; but probe a little deeper and its narrative control, its marvellous structure, its sheer artfulness become apparent.

North Americans are likely to make an equally powerful challenge for next year's Orange Prize: Alison Lurie's *The Last Resort* has been winning admiring notices; Toni Morrison's *Paradise* will have its supporters; new novels are due soon from Anne Tyler and Jane Smiley. Formidable writers who will each have a claim. British writers should not despair, but it should give pause for thought. Why are Americans more ambitious in terms of both content and style? Does it reflect the strength of their creative writing programmes or say something more profound about the comparative histories, cultures and literatures of Europe and America? The novel in the UK and indeed across Europe is not dead, but it unquestionably needs an alarm call. The Orange Prize, by accident perhaps, has given it one.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of the Guardian.

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Models of Dualism Theories

Sunil Ashra

DEVELOPMENT THEORY: A GUIDE TO SOME UNFASHIONABLE PERSPECTIVES

By Rune Skarstein

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 150, Rs. 295.00

This book is about the review of development theory from the macro perspective. In the last two decades development theory literature has been increasingly getting oriented towards minutiae and become highly sophisticated and mathematical. Disturbed with this orientation of development theory the author has tried to put in perspective for students and teachers as also for the policy makers for better understanding of the issues involved.

Development Theory is a different kind of 'textbook' that does not deal particularly with economic theories but rather with the theories of economic development. The non-mathematical treatment of the main text ensures that even non-economists would find it equally useful, with mathematical algebra being relegated to the appendices of the respective chapters. But these appendices are repetitive of the main chapter's arguments; the details could have been avoided by keeping the text to the minimum.

Skarstein contradicts the generally held belief that the newest is always the truest. The book is presented in a chronological manner and shows that what is these days being presented as theories of economic development are actually only a segment of the wider historical literature. The book starts with Karl Marx's Theory of Capitalist Development where his views on development of capitalism are critically evaluated. Marx stressed the role of capitalism and the capitalists in creating more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. According to Marx, through colonialism, foreign capital and trade the backward economies are forced to also become bourgeois eventually. The author refers to Marx's increasing pessimism about the potential of capitalist development in non-European non-capitalist social formations (referred to as 'barbarian' or 'backward' by Marx) through the intrusion of European capital. Eventually, he considered English colonialism in India as mere vandalism without any regenerating function (p. 8).

Skarstein does not however find any theory of underdevelopment in Marx's work except for a few hints at the obstacles that the internal solidity and articulation of pre-capitalist national modes of production pose to the solvent effects of trade and the importance of the character of the old mode of production itself as a precondition for economic development.

From Marx the author moves to Lenin's work on *Capitalist Development and Imperialism*. Lenin viewed capitalism only in the 'advanced countries' to be parasitic and decaying—*moribund capitalism*—as a result of the growth of monopolies and dominance of finance capital. The main objective of Lenin's book *Imperialism* was not to explain underdevelopment, but to explain opportunism, revisionism and chauvinism.

After finding no theory of underdevelopment in either Marx or Lenin the author turns to mainstream economics. First, he starts with the neoclassical school. He finds that the concept of capital in neoclassical theory to be contradictory in purely logical terms, at the same time as the theory makes several unrealistic assumptions which do not even recognize that underdeveloped economies are predominantly pre-capitalist social formations. The evidence supporting this theory has been highly disputable. Neoclassical theory's opposition to protection and persistent advocacy of free trade takes the author to the completely opposite theory of Raul Prebisch and the ECLA (U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America) school. This theory gave rise to much controversy in the 1950s and early 1960s due to the claim by Prebish that there had been a long term deterioration in periphery's terms of trade from 1870 to 1930. But this controversy did not reach any definite conclusion as critics showed evidence that did not clearly support his view. However, the relegating to a corner of ECLA school was more due to its radical opportion of foreign investment than the empirical results based criticism. The later softening of ECLA view on foreign investment, especially for Latin American countries provoked a theoretical opposition—The Dependency School. The ECLA school also advocated some sort of dependency theory. But in their view the dependency of the periphery upon the centre is of a commercial character which arises out of trade relations. The periphery's increasing dependence on the centre is supposed to imply a process of increasing impoverishment or underdevelopment at the periphery. The accumulation of capital, according to Frank, is based on the production of 'economic surplus' in the satellites, and the transfer of this surplus to the metropolis. For this pattern of accumulation to arise and continue the metropolis has to impose on its satellites a commodity producing, exports dependent economy which is acclimated to the requirements of production and consumption patterns within the metropolis itself. The perspective turns Marx upside down, the dynamics of economic development in general and capitalist development, in particular, are no longer located within the internal class structures and specific exploitative relations between social classes. Consequently, the basic characteristic of capitalism is not drive for development of the productivity of social labour, but transfer of surplus from the capitalist satellites to the metropolis.

Not only were criticisms of the Dependency School voiced theoretically but also a number of underdeveloped economices, especially the newly industrialized countries (or the NICs), experienced a process of rapid capitalist industrialization which empirically also argued that the propositions and predictions of the School did not hold. Virtually all central propositions of the Dependency School had been questioned by the 1970s, except one—namely their complete repudiation of all dualism theories. The author quotes Gabriel Palma (1978) in a summary of her critique of the Dependency School which concludes that 'Frank's direct contribution to our understanding of the process of Latin American development is largely limited to his critique of dualist modes for Latin America'. Skarstein, however, feels that Frank's acceptance of all out repudiation of dualism theories is untenable. He feels that despite their tendency to ignore the historical dimension, they are far more interesting and challenging than is imagined.

Skarstein contradicts the generally held belief that the newest is always the truest. The book is presented in a chronological manner and shows that what is these days being presented as theories of economic development are actually only a segment of the wider historical literature.

From here on the book comes to what could be considered as the main topic of the book, i.e. the models of dualism theories, prominent among these being by Lewis (1954), its extensions by Jorgenson (1961, 1970), Fei and Ranis (1964, 1966), Harris and Todaro (1970) which are models in supply-side view mould of agriculture-industry interdependence and where agriculture is seen as more or less exogenous in the interaction process. The discussion of demand-side aspect by Kaldor's contribution to dualism theories are the subject matter of Chapter 8 of the book. The author himself has also tried to extend the work of Kaldor on the effective demand aspect of the agriculture-industry interactions in this chapter as he shows that Kaldor has not taken his argument sufficiently further. Rate of growth of industrial output is determined by 'external' effective demand, originating from the growth of the agricultural surplus. The author refers to experience of very low degrees of capacity utilization which may persist for long periods of time in the industrial sector of underdeveloped economies.

The last chapter of the book is about the determinants of the 'agricultural surplus' as it is supposed that the growth of the industrial sector in underdeveloped economies depend crucially on the size and the rate of growth of the agricultural surplus—a common conclusion reached by Jorgenson, Fei and Ranis, and Kaldor despite considerable differences in their opinion theoretically.

The author is critical of the proponents of economic liberalization as the means of increasing agricultural surplus as they tend to ignore the income-distribution effects within agriculture of changes in the inter-sectoral terms of trade. Thus, they assume that turning terms of trade in favour of agriculture will bring about higher investments and hence more and rapid technical progress resulting in higher yields. But in a class-structured backward agri-

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Skarstein supports the hypothesis that technical progress in agriculture which, in turn, determines the productivity of labour and the size and rate of growth of surplus, is in the long run basically determined by the class relations and the corresponding institutional structures, including land tenures, tenancy systems and the peasant-state relationships.

culture polarized into mighty big farmers on one side and small and marginal farmers and landless labourers on the other, this may not be true. In such an economy, an improvement in terms of trade of agriculture may well result in stagnation or decline in the incomes of the latter group and an enormous increase in the incomes of the former group, who would either spend it on conspicuous consumption or save it as their propensity to consume is low. R. Gaiha (1989) and A. Bose (1993) have also argued along similar lines in their work relating to rural poverty and agriculture in a semi-industrialized economy respectively. The optimism of neoclassical economists with regard to economic liberalization and price reform as a means of achieving a long term increase in agricultural surplus is based on the implicit assumption that institutions in traditional agriculture, by virtue of their long-lasting existence, must be allocatively efficient and that their dynamic productive efficiency must follow from allocative efficiency (A. Bhaduri, 1991). They all seem to believe that there is considerable potential for 'automatic', price-induced technical progress which would result in rising productivity of labour, and consequently increasing marketed surplus in backward agriculture. But this belief as discussed by the author lacks convincing support in historical experience as well as in theory.

The author's concluding remarks throw up points for further research. Skarstein supports the hypothesis that technical progress in agriculture which, in turn, determines the productivity of labour and the size and rate of growth of surplus, is in the long run basically determined by the class relations and the corresponding institutional structures, including land tenures, tenancy systems and the peasant-state relationships. He quotes Robert Bremmer, "...there is a world of difference between the market as offering an opportunity for gain and the market as imposing the necessity to orient one's entire productive existence to maximize one's price/cost ratio to survive in competition".

In the author's opinion, the perspective of class efficiency versus dynamic productive efficiency of socio-economic institutions appears useful. Historically there have been quite a few economic formations where these two categories of efficiency coincide. The formal models which are not based on knowledge of agrarian class structures and corresponding institutions they represent may result in empty, speculative formulations. This approach, according to Skarstein, takes us back to Marx's fundamental methodology, to the necessity of understanding a class analysis in order to identify the obstacles to and the precondition of economic progress. But at the same time he finds little reason to share Marx's optimism that merely removal of these obstacles will enable underdeveloped economies simply to travel the development path of industrialized countries.

The book ends with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi cautioning against mindless destruction of the environment: "It took Britain half the resources of the planet to achieve its prosperity how many planets will a country like India require?" and the need for alternatives to traditional capitalist development is stressed.

This seems out of place as the subject matter of the book is not related to the issues of natural resources. Also no theory of underdevelopment is offered in the book which was the beginning point of the book though he tries to answer this question, albeit indirectly, in his analysis of dualistic theories which could be referred to as the core-periphery.

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Dreaming Creative Organizations

Anjali Gera Roy

DARE TO DREAM

By Anjali Hazarika

Response Books, 1997, pp. 207, Rs. 325.00

Dreams have always inspired leaders. Martin Luther King Jr. "had a dream" which transformed the lives of millions of blacks. Closer home, Nehru dreamed up a whole new nation. They have held pride of place in myth, art and literature. Think of Athene suggesting a course of action to Odysseus in a dream, or Maya's dream prophesying the birth of the Buddha; Yeats got his idea of the gyres in a dream while Coleridge's nightmarish journey in 'The Ancient Mariner' was a dream landscape. Scientists have also accorded due respect to dreams. Remember Kekule's, "Let us learn to dream, gentleman...", speech explaining how the idea of the molecular structure of benzene occurred to him through his dream of a snake with his tail in his mouth. But what do dreams have to do with the hard-nosed manager ruled by linear thinking, rational decision making and logical analysis? A lot, apparently. With the manager of the twenty-first century who values intuition, divergent thinking, emotional intelligence and—spirituality. In other words, dreams are the stuff creative managers are made of, as Anjali Hazarika, the author of *Dare to Dream*, would let us believe. "Dream", Hazarika declares, "is an ocean of possibilities, a blueprint of an attainable reality" and proceeds to use "dreamwork as a new paradigm for management development" establishing it as "a nexus to creativity"

How can "a soft, subjective approach such as dreaming" provide "the hard, objective solutions to business problems", Hazarika muses. A space for "introducing the feminine, the intuitive and the subjective elements into the masculine, the rational, the objective and somewhat mechanistic pattern of managerial thinking" has been created through the general opening out of the patristic discipline of management, particularly in view of the collapse of the rational/scientific model privileging objectivity, logic and intellect. Present holistic paradigms, on the other hand, are concerned with integrating intellect with intuition, private with public, outer with inner. As scientific modes of knowledge are exposed to be not universally but contextually true, management displays a greater alacrity to admit into its traditional bastions elements of art—tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, the ability to connect disparate elements, acceptance of gaps and missing elements. And ever since management became an art, creativity has become the new buzzword to be cultivated through every conceivable means, even outside traditional business disciplines, if necessary. The futuristic manager is the creative manager in whom innovativeness, flexibility, ability to explore alternatives are prized above everything else. While art and literature have long delved into the esoteric wellsprings of creativity and creative personality, management's fixation with plumbing the undiscovered sources of creativity is of very recent origin. And being result oriented, business organizations have pulled out all the stops in tracking down the mysterious process in art, music and film. Of all the potential tools for nurturing creativity, dreamwork is, perhaps, the latest.

The *raison d'etre* for the induction of dreams into creativity and both into management is provided by Montague Ullman's distinction between "two naturally recurring states of consciousness"—"waking consciousness" and "dreaming consciousness"—in his foreword to Hazarika's book. Ullman warns that in "our concern with waking accomplishments we have failed to give due concern to the innate repair mechanisms available to us nightly in the dreams we dream". Anjali Hazarika's pioneering use of dreamwork in fostering creativity is a step in this direction. She links the interest in creativity to the present century's disillusionment with technological progress and material growth. In a world faced with an unprecedented ecological and interpersonal crisis, she pleads for "a non-deified, non-religious spiritualism that enables corporate goals to resonate with the inner meanings that most people seek in their work." As opposed to the logical and quantifiable, she draws attention to the "fuzzy" realm of emotions and their impact on decision making and creativity.

Two assumptions underlie the popularity of creativity workshops in business organizations. The first is the demystification of the belief that creativity is the prerogative of the few and the second that creativity is not confined to the arts. Arts have tended to preserve a mystique around the creative process regarding it as a given. Management's debunking of the myth has been accomplished largely through its classification of creativity into different kinds thus making it as accessible to the scientist, to the innovator and the manager as to the artist.

It is obvious from her use of dream analysis that Hazarika knows her Freud and Jung and Kleitman. But her methodology and approach suggest an eclectic blending of psychoanalysis and traditional divine interpretation, with the dice loaded in favour of tradition whenever in doubt. Her sources are primarily eastern mystical texts ranging from the *Upanishads* and the Buddhist to the Tibetan and I-Ching reflecting her partiality to the pre-scientific, subjective and intuitive. Hazarika locates her theory of consciousness in the Upanishadic division of waking, dreaming, deep sleep and the transcendental fourth state. Creativity and dreams, obviously, do not emanate from the waking mind and physical senses. Both, according to Hazarika, require a suspension of the rational. Her location of creativity and dreams in the occult lends an epiphanic aura to dream images. Experiences of creative persons across disciplines affirm their shared understanding that beyond a certain point rational logic cannot answer any questions. All pathbreaking discoveries have been possible only through relinquishing straight thinking and by making that great leap out of the rational. Management, traditionally, has posited great faith in logical reasoning and empirical analysis. The contemporary prestige of creativity can be explained by a restoration of the emotional and the subjective as in the new fangled theories about emotional intelligence, rightbrained thinking and so on. Ultimately, it boils down to the status of dreams in a culture. The western world is compelled by its present crisis of reality to give due recognition to the extra-sensory and the unreal. But the Orient, for example the *Atharvaveda*, makes no distinction between dream and reality. Nor do other so-called primitive cultures.

Though apparently unconnected, dreams and creativity have a lot in common. Both belong to that nether region of the unconscious or subconscious that had traditionally been banished by mainstream management theory. Today, as boundary crossing between art and science, intellect and spirit, external and internal becomes the norm in current management thought, answers to practical problems *in the outer world can indeed be found* through latent, inner processes. Hazarika quotes William Jones, "human beings, by changing the attitudes of their minds can change the outer aspect of their lives" to prove that dreams, expressions of subconsious longings, fears, desires and anxieties, can offer a way out to hard, day-to-day problems faced by managers. Hazarika's faith in dreamwork in stimulating creativity stems from her awareness of the limits of the rational/scientific. Her understanding of creativity as a mysterious process, "a vague restlessness, a confused excitement, a dim cloud of an idea, an image in a dream, or an obscure intimation of an imminent potential solution", calls attention to its links with intituitive insight rather than willed reasoning. But she doesn't hesitate to borrow Perkins' Snowflake Model of Creativity to list the traits of creative people—commitment to personal aesthetics, sense of purpose, mental mobility, working on the edge of one's competence, objectivity and motivation. Similarly, she views the dreaming mind as free from logic or convention and aligned to divergent thinking. That dreams provide a clue, "A pictorial statement", to the dreamer's unconscious was the basis of Freudian psychoanalysis but Hazarika's exploitation of the latent content of dreams as a key to the dreamer's latent, not manifest, desires in

In a world faced with an unprecedented ecological and interpersonal crisis, she pleads for "a non-deified, non-religious spiritualism that enables corporate goals to resonate with the inner meanings that most people seek in their work." As opposed to the logical and quantifiable, she draws attention to the "fuzzy" realm of emotions and their impact on decision making and creativity.

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problem solving is new. Precisely because hitherto problem solving has been regarded as the domain of the intellect, the reasoning mind and convergent thinking. Conventional problem solving techniques proceed systematically beginning with a minute analysis of the problem, exploration and weighing of various alternatives before a particular course of action is decided upon. Hazarika's employment of dream anaysis to identify the real motives and issues underlying manifest problems deftly combines intuitive and spiritual intimations with scientific analysis.

Seeking solutions to day-to-day problems in unconscious processes, the hall mark of modern psychology, might be seen as an extension of "primitive" practices where divine aid was sought for solving mundane problems. Hazarika's strength lies in her successful invocation of these occult ethnosciences, which she supports by a highly sophisticated awareness and integration of contemporary behavioural theory.

The efficacy of Creativity 2000, Anjali Hazarika's dream workshop, is contingent upon certain preconditions the first being an intrinsic faith in dreams. Just as the oracle's message could be intercepted only by a willing receptacle, dreams yeild meaning only to those willing to let go of logic and rationalisation. Apart from the nitty gritty of following the steps prescribed by Delaney and the ability to memorize the dream in great detail dreams work, as has been proved before, through a recognition of the manner the subconscious impacts on the conscious mind. Great minds, irrespective of their vocations or disciplines, have been quick to grant dreaming consciousness its place in shaping the waking one. What comes as a surprise is the endorsement of this view by the greatest proponents of rational/scientific knowledge such as Neil Bohr, Marie Curie or even Einstein.

Envisioning a new cultural orientation, a new age which will set the conditions for the growth of creativity and other noetic experiences, Hazarika spells out her vision of Creativity 2000. Her definition aims to integrate the masculine, the "how" with the "feminine", the "why" dimension of creativity and seeks to "re-balance and re-own the feminine principle—relationships, belonging, interconnectedness and interdependence." Hazarika's design for Creativity 2000 is detailed in concrete terms beginning with the statement of objectives, the outline of sequences and the action plan.

The method used in the workshop—after the preliminaries such as the conceptual inputs on creativity and dreaming are taken care of—leans heavily towards ancient mystical practices relating to dream incubation which, Hazarika informs us, is modernized by Gayle Delaney. The ritual of sleeping in a sacred space in anticipation of receiving a divinely inspired dream cuts across cultures. In fact, the exact precedent for writing down a problem on a piece of paper answers to which would be communicated in a dream has been reported from Egypt. The use of dreams in healing mentioned by Hazarika has also been documented by several societies. Hazarika borrows the Menezes version of Delaney's technique to combine the "dynamic synergy of intellect and intuition". While her conceptual input on dreams familiarizes her participants with dream theory, the incubation proper harks back to pre-scientific rituals practised across the globe. As dreams are formed by the visual language of symbols and pictures, the use of visualization is suggested as the most appropriate method for the reconstruction of dreams. Learning to translate the dream into its visual imagery, the articulation of an inchoate experience precedes the sharing of the dream essentially involving an interpretation of the metaphors used by the dreamer by the group as a whole thus leading to an enhanced sense of community. Hazarika employs the four stages of the *experiential dreamwork* developed by Ullman. In Stage 1, the dreamer presents a dream to the group who get an idea of the whole by seeking clarifications though the dreamer's decision to share his dreams is entirely left to him. But the mere act of sharing the dream signals a willingness to lower defences. Stage II is used by the group members to make the dream their own—by interpreting its language and feelings experienced by the dreamer. These two stages help in making the dream clearer to him, in the first by its expression and in the second by its projection on to the group. In Stage III, the dream is returned to the dreamer who is free to share his understanding of the dream to the extent he is willing to. The purpose of this stage is to identify the context shaping the dream, for instance, by asking questions about his feelings and thoughts before drifting into sleep.

Reading aloud the dream or playing it back provides a better perspective and understanding of the dream. The point of the whole excercise is to have the group help the dreamer discover the relationship between the dream and the life context by asking questions, interpreting images and offering suggestions. In case, the group process proves to be ineffective, Delaney's *Dream Interview* can be resorted to. The *Dream Interview* is different from psychoanalysis in the sense that the dreamer is encouraged through questionnaires to interpret his own dream rather than depending on the authoritiative interpretation of the psychiatrist.

Thus, Anjali Hazarika's interest in dreamwork grows from a disillusionment with excessive reliance on empirical analysis, sensory data—the conventional staples of management. Her emphasis on the intuitive, the mystical and the subjective is in consonance with the concept of "emotional intelligence" developed by Goleman. Dreams appear to have a natural affinity with the arts in their employment of visual metaphors and the way they bridge the head and the heart. In fact, the idea of the poet amalgamating disparate experiences is closely reproduced in the notion of "kaleidoscopic thinking" of the dream method. Group therapy—in a dream group—provides Newell and Simon's "problem space" in which participants can experiment with alternative approaches to problem solving. The basic assumption, of course, is that the group not only offers scope to the individual to project his experiences but also together the group offers optimum creativity.

The success of dreamwork depends, ultimately, on asking the right questions and interpreting the dream symbols correctly. A solution might elude the dreamer because either the dreamer has not got to the root of the problem or has been unable to separate the real issues from the imagained ones. The case of the young executive, whose query about career advancement sets off a dream about an office party which has ostensibly nothing to do with his career, substantiates this point. A close analysis of his dream reveals an overlap between the personal and the professional—the executive's filial duties which constrain his choices and advancement—which he had not thought worth considering. The dream group helps him to get his priorities right and make his career choice accordingly. Hazarika herself guides the reader through ancient texts, including *Atharvaveda*, Tibetan wisdom and the Buddhist *Mrtyuvandvana*, for traditional interpretations of some common dreams like falling, flying, persecution, excesses and death.

The impulse behind inducting creativity in management is to gain competitive advantage in a globalised scenario where the key to success lies in innovativeness, adaptibility to change and flexibility. The obstacles to the new approach lie in the traditional mindset in organizations which believe in technological knowhow, watertight functional areas, minute specialization, excessive bureaucracy, short term focus, technological rigidities, poor nurturing of creative ideas and non-inclusion of innovation as core value. Creativity 2000 is clearly designed for organizations of the future based on the principle of interconnectedness, non-hierarchical relationships and collaboration. The paradigm is illustrated in process through the example of Engineers India Limited. The learning elements derived from the workshop corroborate Hazarika's faith in divergent thinking, right brained intelligence, subjective insights and cooperativeness. The take home element is crucial because from the outset she has harped on the practical value of dreams. Her agenda extends beyond the interpretation of dreams to explore their potential for envisioning and shaping the future. Throughout, by dwelling on the overlap between the inner and outer, she concentrates on their role in shaping reality. The test of the dream, therefore, lies in the doing. The examples provided in the text—such as the dream of the Chairman of Bongaigon Refinery in charge of Oil India Limited, about gas flares from a well which had ostensibly been written off while following routine procedures, actually comes true as gas is struck at the same site despite Barua's initial refusal to trust a flimsy dream hunch. Rationalism drove the rainmaker out of business, the crisis of reason has brought dreaming back into reckoning.

To all the doubting Thomases among readers here is a surefire recipe for creativity. Have a problem? Sleep over it like in the good old-fashioned days. Leave a note stating the problem in a phrase under your pillow. Say the phrase over and over again until sleep claims you. If you truly believe in dreams, you are likely to find a solution by the next morning. But only if you remember the dream in detail, crack the visual clues and connect with your waking reality. If you are a trained dreamer and have mastered the dream idiom, the answer to that knotty problem in only a dream away.

Anjali Hazarika is acutely conscious of having stepped into the untrodden. But the anxiety and the doubts and the exhilaration which comes with breaking new grounds communicate themselves to the reader. Can dreamwork offer a panacea to hard managerial problems? She begins in a spirit of exploration and questioning carrying the reader along with her in her quest to discover non-rational, subjective, intuitive, feminine routes to understanding.

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An Impressive Collection

Sujit Mukherjee

SELECTED LETTERS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Edited by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson

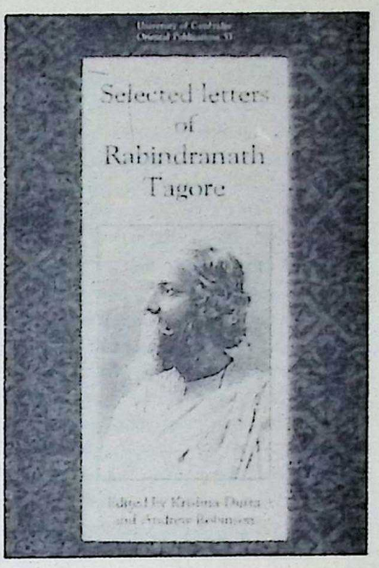
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (U.K.), 1997, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications No. 53, pp. 561, Rs. 550.00

When Sisirkumar Das put together *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* in three massive volumes for publication by Sahitya Akademi, he and his team decided to leave out the letters. Among the many reasons he gave, the principal one was: "Our decision to exclude the letters has not been prompted by the absence of scholarly editions but by the unavailability of the correspondence in full. In the absence of the response of one of the participants, the letters of the other are likely to be denuded of their contexts. They would appear, to use a Tagorean simile, like a bird bereft of one wing" (Introduction, III, p. 15). Dutta and Robinson have very opportunely clutched the existing wing and produced a volume of three hundred and forty-six 'selected' letters, three-quarters of which were written originally in English. I cannot remember Cambridge University Press ever having published anything of or on Rabindranath. Now they have and must immediately be congratulated for having set a price which even Indian college and university libraries can afford.

In compiling and editing this volume, Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson have not so much rushed in but confidently trod a territory which Professor Das not so much feared but chose not to tread. Individually as well as jointly, Robinson and Dutta bear impressive credentials for undertaking such an invasion. In 1990 they 're-translated' *Glimpses of Bengal*; in 1995 they published a new biography of the poet entitled *The Myriad-minded Man* and followed up in 1997 with *Rabindranath Tagore: An Anthology*. Earlier, on his own, Robinson had published *The Art of Rabindranath Tagore* (1989), the same year in which his book on Satyajit Ray came out), then edited the correspondence between Rabindranath and Leonard Elmhirst published under the title *Purabi* (1991). As for Krishna Dutta, she had already shared with Mary Lago the task of translating some stories of Rabindranath which appear as the volume *Selected Short Stories* (1991). Not many Rabindranath devotees of recent times can claim to have served him so voluminously.

Yet, for some reason, this duo has not earned in this country credit proportionate to their hard work. One reason could be our 'nationalist' mistrust of a foreigner like Robinson seeking to appropriate a much treasured national property. Another could be a less confined antipathy towards a rather young and unproved critic who takes on first, the films of Satyajit Ray, then the paintings of Rabindranath, and gets both books published the same year. I used to wonder which other Bengali icon Robinson would worship next—proposed Chuni Goswami as a possibility until he was dislodged by Saurav Ganguly—but Robinson had by then got sucked in by the quicksand of Rabindranath's reputation in the West. He has striven mightily to pull himself and his subject out of that mess through half a dozen books and nearly as many publishers. The commendable objective of his enterprise has been to demythify the old western view of Rabindranath as a long-bearded mystic—a wise man from the East. Yet, *Selected Letters* has been published by CUP as an addition to their list of Oriental Publications. Is this another instance of orientalism striking back?

Robinson's own reputation—and by association that of Krishna Dutta—was somewhat besmirched when, soon after the publication of their biography, they were charged by William Radice and Ketaki Kushari Dyson of having used without due acknowledgement some of the translations done by the latter. Several Sunday issues of *The Statesman* of Calcutta highlighted what was merrily described as 'a mixed-doubles match' between contestants who all live in England and have taken upon themselves the duty of redeeming Rabindranath before the western world. The context remains undecided but an impression has grown about Robinson's tendency to re-work other people's work into his own. *The Myriad-minded Man* is a good example of this method. Readable as the book is,



. . . for some reason, this duo has not earned in this country credit proportionate to their hard work. One reason could be our 'nationalist' mistrust of a foreigner like Robinson seeking to appropriate a much treasured national property. Another could be a less confined antipathy towards a rather young and unproved critic who takes on first, the films of Satyajit Ray, then the paintings of Rabindranath, and gets both books published the same year.

it gives no evidence of new research but much proof of what is already available, albeit presented here with certain new emphases. The justification offered that this biography is meant only or mainly for western readers seems to ignore the global village—at least where the English language is concerned—we are supposed to be living in now.

The Robinson-Dutta method was first demonstrated in *Glimpses of Bengal* (1991), a title which promises to be a bibliographer's delight in days to come. Many years ago there was a *Glimpses of Bengal Life* (1913), consisting of thirteen stories of Rabindranath translated by one Rajaniranjan Sen and published by G.A. Natesan of Madras. This volume must have been practically forgotten by 1921, when Macmillan of London published *Glimpses of Bengal* consisting of letters from Rabindranath to his niece Indira during 1885–95, selected and abridged by the author, then translated into English by his nephew Surendranath. In their version, Robinson-Dutta have retained the title (the Bangla original was entitled *Chinnapatra*, meaning torn or plucked leaves) but re-translated the originals in their entirety, "dropped several . . . letters and added some new ones". Even if only three letters were dropped and four added while the deletions (made by Rabindranath) were restored, I should have thought that the effort deserved to be entitled anew—so that no confusion could be caused to those who have access to the 1913 *Glimpses* as well as to the 1921 *Glimpses*.

A very different method (bar that of retaining the old title) was followed by Robinson in his 1991 version of *My Reminiscences*. The Bangla original of this autobiographical essay, *Jibansmriti* (1912), reappeared in English translated by Surendranath Tagore as *My Reminiscences* in 1917. For its next appearance over seventy years later, Robinson has merely revised the earlier version here and there without attempting any re-translation. His decision to revive this text may also be questioned. In the original, though written around 1911–12, Rabindranath retraced his life only till about 1885. Readers in English who pick it up in its new guise will certainly expect a longer set of reminiscences than those which stop short over a hundred years ago.

Both methods have been employed in the three substantial volumes that have followed. It is most remarkable that these were published within two years of each other. This was physically possible because three different publishers were at work, and none of them could have discounted the fact that Robinson happens to be the literary editor of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*. The biography, as already mentioned, does not offer any new evidence or insight—instead, pleads that it is meant for western readers who do not know much about Rabindranath and, even if they did, cannot read him in the original. The same apology is offered for the anthology: "Readers, particularly western readers for whom this anthology is intended . ." Here, about one-third of the material chosen was written originally in English—this has been revised in little or large measure. For their latest effort, Robinson-Dutta regard "this book of letters as a companion to that book (the Biography)". In other words, this too has been tilted towards innocent (or ignorant) readers abroad.

Proof of such tilting can be seen in the proportion by which three-quarters

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of about three hundred and fifty letters included here are those that were written originally in English, "many of which remain virtually or wholly unknown, even to Tagore scholars". This must be more true of foreign scholars, especially those who have no easy access to Rabindra Bhavan archives, since about "half of the English letters in this book have not previously appeared in print". To serve readers abroad even more fully, Robinson-Dutta could have considered the option of selecting only the English letters and thereby supplemented the Sahitya Akademi volumes mentioned above.

Faced with the choice of whether to leave the letters in English exactly as Rabindranath wrote them or to correct his lapses in composition, our compiler-editors have chosen the latter approach but "altered Tagore's original *only* where the English is unclear or ambiguous". Robinson-Dutta could have taken a chance and left it to readers presumably not all less qualified than themselves to make meaning out of what Rabindranath had written. As for the Bangla letters, the compilers claim they have translated all these themselves. They do not, however, clarify whether any of these had been translated earlier and published. Forewarned by their previous practice, we would have felt relieved by such assurance. Meanwhile, the material could well form the subject for an M. Phil. dissertation or two at Visva-Bharati where most of the originals are available—(i) an examination of the 'alterations' effected in the English letters to see to what extent these have contributed to clarity and eliminated all ambiguity; (ii) an examination of the Bangla originals against existing translations, and comparison with the new translations.

In that anthology, apart from a 23-page introduction at the beginning, each section is introduced briefly. Here, after a short introduction to the volume, the editors "have chosen to provide a separate introduction to almost every letter, along with comprehensive notes. Without such individual introduction, many of the letters would be virtually meaningless, even to Tagore scholars". That is a tall claim indeed, but it does make for the most complete background information that one would require for reading a text one had not read before. Considering there are three hundred and forty-six letters in the book, the volume of such editorial matter can be imagined. In some instances, the introduction is longer than the letter it introduces.

The selected letters are arranged in chronological order—the divisions correspond roughly to the chapters of the biography—thus, reading the numerous introductions successively is like reading a condensed *The Myriad-minded Man*. Many of the letters were partially quoted, in the original or in translation, in the biography. By now offering the full texts, the editor-compilers have satisfied a curiosity which may have been aroused by the earlier work.

Not more than a quarter of "several thousand letters" Rabindranath wrote were in English and, from this quarter, about two hundred and sixty have been reproduced here. That cannot but look unbalanced as a selection. Even within this selection, a large proportion are those addressed to internationally renowned persons like Woodrow Wilson, Romain Rolland, Albert Einstein and the like. Possibly this has been done to project Rabindranath as being at one time a public figure on the world stage. Here again, the selection seems designed to impress foreign readers.

Even the Indian names mentioned in editorial commentary are those likely to be recognized abroad—Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Satyajit Ray, Anita Desai. The most extreme demonstration of this is a foreword by Amartya Sen, who is justly known the world over for his intellectual achievements—which do not, however, include any writings on Rabindranath. As this foreword betrays, there is nothing Sen has to say which was not already known. He said so at even greater length in *The New York Review of Books* last year. The editors have acknowledged "the generous assistance of Amartya Sen" but do not mention the Foreword or the NYRB article. I wonder why—wonder also which was written earlier. The frequent reference to Satyajit Ray confirms that Robinson probably holds him in high esteem as a 'Tagore scholar'. In that review of *The English Writings* cited at the outset, Robinson chided Sisir Das thus: "And it is staggering to come across not a single reference to Satyajit Ray, the great interpreter of Tagore on the screen, who has done so much to make him appealing to today's world". Which world? Whose world?—we may like to ask. As for Anita Desai, not only is *Selected Letters* dedicated to her but there is a flattering reference to her at the end of the acknowledgments. It reminds us that Robinson alone and sometime with Krishna Dutta's assistance have held Rabindranath Tagore 'in custody' for more than ten years. However, they prophesy: "This, we expect is our last book on him." I cannot easily decide whether to mourn or to celebrate.

Sujit Mukherjee wrote his doctoral dissertation on Tagore and has recently translated two of his works—Three Companions *(1992) and* Gora *(1997).*

On Yama, *Mrtyu* and the Missing Link

Purushottam Agrawal

MRTYU: CONCEPT OF DEATH IN INDIAN TRADITIONS

By Gian Giuseppe Fillipi

D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 258 + xiv, Rs. 325.00

YAMA: THE GLORIOUS LORD OF THE OTHER WORLD

By Kusum P. Merh

D.K. Printworld, New Delhi 1996, pp. 302 + xvi, Rs. 340.00

It is inevitable for any culture to formulate its stand on the phenomenon of death because of its universal certitude and consequent human obsession with its aftermath. Thus ironically a concept of death is actually a concept of life or conversely we can say that any conceptualization of mundane life is interwoven with a concept of life hereafter i.e. death! Naturally therefore, an inquiry into the concept of death in a given cultural tradition must holistically consider the concerns and issues as formulated by the epistemology of that tradition. The matter of death is too far-reaching to be methodologically confined to eschatology, as Arnold Schweitzer had noted in a slightly different context when he found Buddhist ethics lacking in lasting philosophical appeal precisely because it considered the detailed engagement with questions of death and the existence of God rather unnecessary.

Keeping the above in mind let us ask: What is unique in the Indian concept of death? How did it evolve? More importantly: what is the epistemological import for us modernists (or post-modernists, if you will), of revisiting the "Indian" (or any pre-modern) concept of death and its evolution in history? Is it only with the intention of reconstructing or glorifying the exotica of the "noble savage" that we approach the world of "mythical" (as opposed to "historical") consciousness and its manifestations in the codes and languages of rituals?

Here a digression seems to be in order.

Even without going into the question of the validity of the post-modern critique of the Enlightenment project, it has to be conceded that the Euro-centric nature of the Enlightenment and the geo-historical construct of its "Universal" rationality is a sadly incontrovertible fact, which has resulted in the othering of all that was and all that remains of non-European and non-Christian cultures. In fact the pagan cultures and world-outlooks of pre-Christian Europe were the first to suffer appropriation and even elimination at the hands of the Pauline Church and its political and intellectual establishment. Subsequently Europe as defined by this establishment became the standard by which "other" traditions and cultures were to be judged. The non-European societies were denied the existential status of being located in "History" because these societies had not, apparently, developed in accordance with the standards set by European historical progression. The most tragic (and ironic) example of this tendency is the internalization of Euro-centric arrogance even by those who intended to evolve a discourse of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Further, even many of those who intend to study the non-European traditions "sympathetically" cannot get over the syndrome of taking Europe as the standard and wittingly or unwittingly othering the non-European traditions. Most of the time this othering no longer takes place in the classical orientalist mould. It is much subtler and in many cases a result of the inattentive internalization of the arrogant rationality of the "Enlightenment". Such internalization leads to serious problems of perspective and methodology.

This unfortunately is the case with both books under review. Before we discuss them in detail let us ask another question or the same question a bit differently. What kind of inquiry should lead us to the study of so-called traditional societies and their ways of conceptualizing various experiences? Ob-

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viously this question is valid only in the context of studies which intend to go beyond the "manual" or compendium format. Since both Gian G. Fillipi and Kusum P. Merh as serious scholars have embarked upon a comprehensive treatment of the subject matter, the question of the perspective of the enquirer is relevant. After all, the perspective defines the contours of the scholarly imagination—a necessary ingredient of any worthwhile research.

It is the limitation of this imagination which prompts Fillipi to start with the astonishing statement, "Accepted with what westerners would define as an attitude of fatalism, it (death) is considered a natural event, a part of life, *just like poverty, sickness and old age*" (p. 1, emphasis added). It is quite true that Indian tradition, on a certain plane considers death as a natural fact of life, but it is really too much to draw the conclusion which Fillipi draws. In fact, the realization of the dialectics of life and death is one thing and the so-called fatalism is quite another, to mix them up is to actually subscribe to the worst kind of orientalist prejudice, which simply ignores the fact of the "fatalist" Indian tradition having evolved the discourses of health-care, state-craft and also of carnal pleasure along with that of death.

The uniqueness of the Indian concept of death can be addressed more meaningfully if the essentialist generalizations of the kind mentioned above are carefully avoided. This would naturally lead to a more cautious use of the very term "Indian", as its use sometimes entails a hegemonic implication. Fillipi makes it clear at the outset that by "Indian" he actually means "Contemporary Hinduism" (p. 2) so far as his study is concerned. Then why not use this phrase itself? The related problem is the fact that the author mainly uses the text of the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa* to describe the rituals of this contemporary Hinduism, which is alright, provided the caste, community and region specificities of the rites and rituals are given due weightage. This is not the case here. Besides being a methodological lapse, it once again reflects the more basic problem of perspective.

Undoubtedly both the books are written with scholarly meticulousness, in fact that is precisely why the lack of provocative imagination becomes even more conspicuous in both the books. To give an example, Fillipi rightly notes that,

"It has been said that in India death (*mṛtyu*) is not opposed, as it is in the West, to the idea of life (jivan) but rather to birth (jāti). This statement is indeed intriguing and contributes to present with indelible colours the picture of the beliefs that have been shared on this topic—and today still are—by the people of the subcontinent. Nevertheless, such a statement, due to an excessive schematism, appears too generic, since the points of view which have developed over the centuries are many and complex" (pp. 5–6).

The eschatology rooted in prophetic epistemology conceptualizes death as a horrible 'evil' necessarily opposed to the 'good' of life, while the Hindu and other pagan traditions, even though appreciating the sorrow and loss associated with death, seek to conceptualize it in a much more subtle and multilayered fashion.

One would naturally expect, with such an opening, some effort at grappling with the "complex" points of view. Instead, one finds the author himself contributing to the "indelible colours" of the "picture", an inevitable outcome of just describing the varied rituals without giving much thought to dealing with their import and significance, that too with excessive dependence on one particular text.

In this context, it is indeed surprising that neither Fillipi nor Merh mention the *Srimadbhagvat Gita* even once! Or, given the nature of perspective of the authors, probably it is not! After all, the *Gita* neither contributes to the description of Yama's personality nor to the rites and rituals of death! But the fact remains that the very idea of the *Gita* is so imaginative and in the context of present discussion, so instructive that its exclusion is bound to be noticed. The reason is profoundly simple. To the author, more accurately to the tradition of *Mahabharata*, the *Gita* was necessitated by the fear and repulsion of death, not of one's own but that of the near and dear ones (which makes its text more poignant and the context more humane). Moreover this text to a large extent epitomizes the mind of the tradition whose "concept" of death and whose "glorious lord of the other world" is sought to be studied by Fillipi and Merh respectively.

As a matter of fact the uniqueness of the mind of this tradition lies in its unfamiliarity with the idea of a neat division between good and evil. Consequently it does not counterpose death in a schematic fashion either to the idea of life or to that of birth. On the contrary the *Jaminiopanishad Brahman* maintains that, "Man dies thrice. First when he is placed in the mother's womb by the father's semen; second when he is initiated into yajna and third when his corpse is placed on the pyre." (3/2/4–2,5,7,11). Relate this with the fascinating imagination of Yama being the brother of Manu and of being the first to be sacrificed! This is noted by Merh but typically without going into its import or relating it with the kind of philosophical abstractions mentioned above. In order to appreciate the Indic concept of death, it is absolutely crucial to understand that this myth is concretizing the abstract concept of life and death being interwoven, by isomorphing the world of human existence as Manu and its nemesis as Yama. The very provenance of the word 'Yama' points in this direction only.

Interestingly, the idea implicit in this myth is common to many pagan traditions. It is unique only in comparison with the prophetic religions, and in its fuller and more complex unfolding in the Indian wisdom. The pagan idea of the first Man and his death being "brothers" has been extensively researched. We need not go into this at present. Suffice it to note that the idea of Yama being brother of Manu and being generous enough to become the first one to die was first discarded by the founder of the first Prophetic Religion—Zarathustra.

The eschatology rooted in prophetic epistemology conceptualizes death as a horrible 'evil' necessarily opposed to the 'good' of life, while the Hindu and other pagan traditions, even though appreciating the sorrow and loss associated with death, seek to conceptualize it in a much more subtle and multilayered fashion. This leads to the 'trinity' of Yama, Mrtyu and *Nirṛiti* being replaced later on by Kala. Merh duly notes the evolution of this trinity. The elaborate and time-consuming rituals of death naturally reflect the complexity of the concept which is at the root of moving "human solidarity" of "so many people taking turns in distracting the family of the deceased from their sorrows" (Fillipi, p. 145).

Unfortunately, such flashes of insight are not many, because both the authors have (perhaps unwittingly) allowed their perspective to be heavily tinted by the Euro-centric epistemology and the prophetic dichotomy between good and evil. To be fair to them, our authors only typically represent the widespread trend that leads to the 'ordering' and 'othering' of non-European cultures and non-prophetic religions, sometimes, intentionally and sometimes inspite of the best intentions. The scholars and researchers start looking for the parallels between the 'standard' i.e. Europe and the 'object' of study. Examples are too many; from the 'monotheism' in the Vedas to 'humanism' in medieval Bhakti poetry! The extent of this parallelism becomes painfully clear when Merh translates the term *apauruṣeya* in the context of the Vedas as "not composed by men". The fact of the matter is that in this context *Puruṣa* stands not for man but for "God" himself, which means that the Vedas are on an equal footing with God instead of being 'composed' by Him. This is obviously different from the idea of some text having not men but God as its author and to be sure this difference is not just rhetorical but has serious epistemological as well as ontological implications. A serious research-work is expected to be sensitive to such crucial differences.

This review might sound rather harsh, but it is not intended to be. Undoubtedly both Fillipi and Merh have followed the tenets of meticulous research. The irony lies in this meticulousness not being complimented by a similar rigor at the level of perspective. This becomes rather striking in the case of Fillipi because of the overly ambitious sub-title of his book. After all, one expects something more than the description of rites and rituals as detailed in the *Garuḍa-Purāṇā* when the subtitle of the book happens to be "concept of death in Indian traditions".

To repeat, there are insightful observations here and there in both the books, sadly left just like that. Two examples should suffice. Merh gives a detailed account of Yama's image as 'creator' (pp. 112–119), but does not bother to ponder over the implications of the "glorious lord of the other world" being visualized as the "creator". Even more disconcerting is the example from Fillipi, who notes, "For the Indian, human individuality is composite and multiple, as has been amply demonstrated in this study" (p. 183). This reviewer, however failed to see the 'demonstration', for the simple reason that the crucial link between the 'multiplicity' of individuality and the multivocality of the "Indian traditions" is completely missing in Fillipi's study.

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Strong On Craft, Low On Propaganda

Shobhana Bhattacharji

THE PARDON OF SAINT ANNE

By William Palmer

Vintage, London, 1997, pp: 252, UK £6.99 (paperback)

The Pardon of Saint Anne: A novel in three parts.
Place: Germany and France.
Time: 1932 to a little after D-Day.

Part One: A spa near Coblenz. First person narrative by Walther, an aspiring photographer, son of a missing-presumed-dead German father and an English mother, brother of future Hitler Youth fanatic, nephew of Karl who lives in Berlin amid beautiful pictures, the beautiful people, and beautiful young men.

Part Two: Berlin. Also first person narrative by Walther, now an efficient photographer, canny about light, shadow and angles. Hitler becomes Chancellor, Röhm is purged, SS replaces the SA, Crystal Night (pretty, lying description for violent attacks on Jewish homes and offices by SS who smashed up Jewish establishments) occurs. Karl is murdered because he is a "pervert." Walther's wealthy grandmother dies. He gets a job as photographer for a magazine with the help of a photographer hero of his youth.

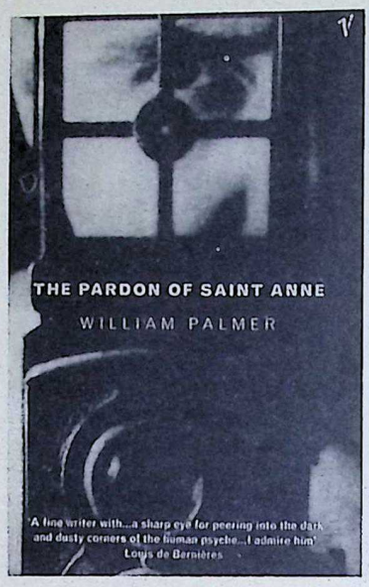
Part Three: A German camp on the beaches of Normandy just before D-Day. Third person narrative. All soldiers at this camp are medically unfit for active service. Walther, for example, is partially deaf from a bomb blast. Another man is obsessed with proving that Jesus was not a Jew but Nordic and that St. Anne, Jesus' maternal grandmother, came from a village near their camp. A third has been on the Russian front and has a secret cache of photographs of the terrible killings there. Why does he have them? Is he critical of German brutality? Is he merely obsessive about mass killings? The French Resistance has its own ideas about the photographs, as Walther learns to his horror soon after D-Day. These medically disabled men are supposed to make survey maps paintings and photographs of the area.

Without the rigid structure of the well made play, historical detail alone would have run *The Pardon of Saint Anne* ragged. Readers are expected to know Hitler's Germany and know it well. It isn't enough to be familiar with what the SS and SA were but also how the Nazis plotted their course to an opposition-free Germany, eliminating gays, Communists, and Jews in sequence and not simultaneously, as Palmer makes very clear. Walther's life bumps against all of this, more than once embroiling him completely.

A second "dialogue" in the novel is between Palmer and Christopher Isherwood, a formidable predecessor for anyone attempting a novel of Nazi Berlin. The second paragraph of Isherwood's "Berlin Diary of 1930" in *Goodbye to Berlin* (1930) opens with "I am a camera." Palmer could have pretended that Isherwood's Berlin novels didn't exist. Instead, he acknowledges Isherwood by making his protagonist a photographer. The thoughtful passages on the role of the artist in society alone make *The Pardon of Saint Anne* well worth reading.

Walther thinks that a photographer has only to record all he sees because the camera cannot lie. His one aesthetic indulgence is sharp lines. At the end of January 1933, the week that Hitler became chancellor of Germany, Walther is told by a socialist acquaintance that he'd better take it easy on those clean modernist lines because they are likely to get him into trouble with the Nazis. With faith in his camera and the obtuseness of youth, he cannot believe that art too is a political target. And yet, in what are astonishingly Isherwood-like opening passages (diary, camera), he says that jazz was banned by the Nazis. He also notes that as camera technology improved, his photographs had clearer details, and still he believes that the camera does not lie.

Contradictions of this sort are not peculiar to Walther nor of course, to fictional characters. Palmer's point is that it may take harsh experience for



Huge parts of the novel are about a question that is asked but inadequately answered. How did Germans allow the Holocaust and its attendant horrors? Daniel Goldberg's controversial *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is one sort of answer, Hannah Arendt's commentary on the Eichmann trial another. Trying to answer the question is an industry in itself.

the contradictions to straighten out but by then individuals have contributed to wider social anarchy by simply shutting themselves—in this case—to a political agenda. Things are seen to exist in separate compartments. Jews, communists, gays, cabarets—each seemed a different sort of ban when in fact it was a single fearsome censorship.

To return for a spell to Isherwood's "I am a camera." Isherwood's Berlin novels extend from 1930 to 1939 when he left Germany. What else could he do but record the terrifying slide in very few days from happy, amoral Berlin to censored, unidimensional Nazi rule? He could see the change but not, at the time, its aftermath or its hidden processes. Fifty-five years on, Palmer has the advantage of freer speech and can talk of gays, for instance, as Isherwood could not. Ishwerwood avoided reference to his sexuality in his writing wrote of it in the third person until think, *Christopher and His Kind* (1977). could not, therefore, write of the specific fear of gays in Hitler's Germa whereas Palmer has a major event, death of Karl, around this in his nov

Palmer's literary plottin (Isherwood, the well made play etc) unobtrusive and encourages one discover things the author has not s but which are present all the same. F example, mulling over Walther's almo coldblooded response to Karl's murde one is reminded of the terrible tru voiced in Nazi Germany that un "they" came for "me," individuals d not consider the elimination of enti groups to be "my" problem. Is th another foundation of the novel?

Whether it is or not, the point is th *The Pardon of Saint Anne* does not rel on firework-fantasy but uses actu events and simple yet devastating pa terns (historical facts, the exempl story, the well made play). Post-mo ernists could learn much from hi Palmer, too, jumps from one narrati voice to another, one time to anothe and his novel seems to flit by in a seri of images. But he never loses sight that unfashionable creature, a gran narrative.

Palmer also has the advantage information. He can tell us about t building of the concentration camp for instance, which Isherwood may have known about. They were bui with every detail of how and where t hideous deaths would be conducte Dachau and the other concentrati camps began to open in 1933:

> for the straightening-out of the ne regime's enemies. For, make nomi take, just like the design of the u forms and the shadow offices an ministries and who should occup them these places had also bee planned; the sites chosen, th buildings designed for their ne purpose long ago. Every detail their tormenting regimes had be worked out, down to the calculate inadequacy of diets, the degrees punishments, the insufficient leng of bunk and thinness of blanket, t coarse uniforms, the badges for ea grade of prisoner—all these had be urgently and fondly discussed a laid out with much hilarity drinking sessions in cellars and bar

It was hardly possible that the Golgothas were created without th knowledge of people living around th areas. What did Germans think th camps were being built for? Why wa there no protest? No significant action

Huge parts of the novel are about

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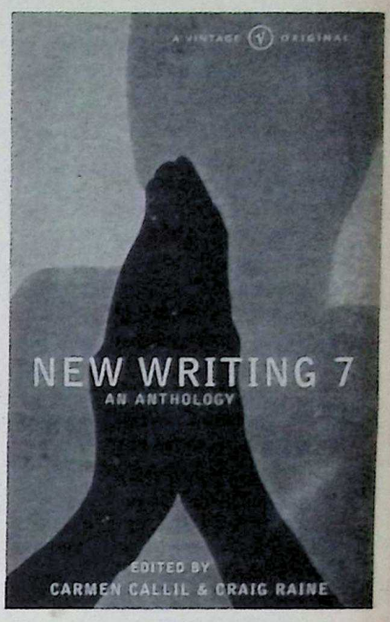
Never A Dull Moment

Smita Agarwal

NEW WRITING 7: AN ANTHOLOGY
Edited by Carmen Callil and Craig Raine
Vintage in association with The British Council, U.K., 1998, pp. x+417, £7.99



We've had our five big blasts in Pokharan: India is chock-full of attitude. My staunch Hindu friend says reading anthologies like *New Writing 7* stinks of the colonial hangover and cultural imperialism, especially since the Preface proclaims that this annual anthology (founded in 1992) will "occasionally" accept contributions from English language writers of non-British nationality "if, they contribute to [the] aim" of presenting "a multi-faceted picture of modern Britain." I reply, as a struggling, if not failed, writer in English it's my interest to find out what's happening at the level of ideas and technique in English language writing in any corner of the world.

It surprises me why neither *New Writing 6 nor New Writing 7*, feature Indian writers in English. Is it because work from them wasn't solicited or are they not aware of this forum? *New Writing 5* did include a chilling short story titled "Ravi Shastri" by Nalinaksha Bhattacharya. The story had nothing to do with the idea of presenting "a multi-faceted picture of modern Britain" though it did have a lot to do with cricket. A second lieutenant researching on the Lepchas once told me that, like polo, cricket too is a variation of a regional game played somewhere in North East India, and, it does have startling similarities with gilli-danda! Now, how did Mr. Bhattacharya get past that competent and formidable lady, Dr. Harriet Harvey Wood? Good writing, of course.

There isn't a trace of dullness in *New Writing 7*. It's recommended as, for the price, you get variety—poetry, short story, drama, essays, film scripts and extracts from novels in progress. The writing isn't new in the sense of it being pathbreaking or breakthrough, but, it's new in the sense of it being the latest from a crop of very few new (two or three) and the rest, established writers.

Despite Ted Hughes not being aware of my existence, I read up a lot of him and fantasized a lot about him while pursuing a D. Phil. on Sylvia Plath. Hughes' voice and vision are as strong and sharp as they've always been. The fusion of the natural and the human world in poems like "Brother Peartree" and "The Coat" show that the magic of his writing is intact, though, if you really wanna go wah-wah over Hughes' powers of observation and description do read up a poem called "Eclipse."

Bernard O'Donoghue's poetic voice is as level as the man I met reading his poems in Cambridge. The poems are enjoyable because they're sober poems with a twist.

A good read is the lengthy mixed-media, "The Pleasure Dome" by Ian McEwan. It has the makings of a successful TV serial with bits of "The X-Files" on Star TV, "Johnny Quest" on Cartoon Network and good old James Hadley Chase thrown in and whipped up. The writing is both nerve-racking and addictive like Ecstasy, or Viagra perhaps? After a good high "The Pleasure Dome" ends tamely with a paean for the therapeutic powers of pleasure and another, more subtle one, for the cautionary powers of art.

There isn't a trace of dullness in *New Writing 7*. It's recommended as, for the price, you get variety—poetry, short story, drama, essays, film scripts and extracts from novels in progress. The writing isn't new in the sense of it being path-breaking or breakthrough, but, it's new in the sense of it being the latest from a crop of very few new (two or three) and the rest, established writers.

New Writing 7 has a section called Extracts from novels in progress. Matthew Kneale's "English Passengers" with its joky prankish world of seafaring peddlars and pushers took me back to Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevie White's short extract, "Blind Solomon" works well because of its pace and dialogue.

In the short story section, Lucy Ellman and Matthew Singh-Toor use the letter to unfold their stories while Philip Kerr uses the review to tell his tale. I must confess that I read, "Squirrel Man Mac" because of the writer's odd name. In India, a Christian-Sardar name is a rarity. "Squirrel Man Mac" is an intricately told simple tale of the discovery of sexual happiness. Matthew Singh-Toor uses the epistolary technique proficiently though, I wonder, how much of it suggested itself to the writer and how much of it he contrived. The writing reveals the dispossession brought on by immigration, as also, a mind disoriented by the "task [of] assimilating the marvellous yet shocking revelations" made to the protagonist during his stay in Sowhaddhi Khas, Punjab, India. Born woman and trained to get the hots only for the Amitabh Bachchans and the Leonardo di Caprios, for years I failed to understand how men could find sexual fulfillment within their sex; until I read a small pink pamphlet published for private circulation only, titled *Less Than Gay*. It changed me.

Louis de Bernieres has previously, appeared in *New Writing 6*. *"Mamacita's Treasure" is of interest to the Indian reader when de Bernieres describes the sweltering heat and a dotty* grandmotherly woman who's able to negotiate a canny deal by describing a feature and distance on a map as, "... that is a rock that looks like

question that is asked but inadequately answered. How did Germans allow the Holocaust and its attendant horrors? Daniel Goldberg's controversial *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is one sort of answer, Hannah Arendt's commentary on the Eichmann trial another. Trying to answer the question is an industry in itself.

Palmer is interested in the relatively ordinary person's part in making Nazi Germany. Walther's ideal of uncommitted art is as much responsible as Karl's comment that "these people" (the SA) would become anarchic without "our" control even as he stuffs money into an SA man's extended box. The SA, of course, merely paved the way for the SS or the "new police" who are suddenly everywhere. Equally suddenly, the SA vanishes. Karl, Walther, and other Berliners do not know that the SA has been slaughtered overnight.

Karl believed his important friends would help him but once Hitler becomes chancellor, friends transmogrify into spies. Karl is murdered by the SS.[1]

Walther is all wrong. Merely recording events is not much use. He says that 1933 "was the time for all liberal foolishness to be put aside," but goes on to say that he avoided the new concentration camps. He preferred to record less dangerous truths with his camera.

Recently, I heard school children debate on terrorism.[2] The winners argued that negotiation is superior to violence as a way of ending terrorism, a major form of which, they said, was state terrorism. They spoke much sense. But what does one do if there is no forum for negotiation? If no opposition is permitted? Obviously, such a situation should not be allowed to come into existence. That, rather than the disaffection which the debates said should be rooted out, is the point we need to begin the fight at.

The Pardon of Saint Anne is strong on craft, low on propaganda, respects history, and is proof that the intelligent novel is far from dead. It is also relevant to India today.

1. It would be nice to know why the SA collected money all the time. Isherwood has a sequence on it in *Goodbye to Berlin*. Palmer has one in his novel. But the expert on Hitler's Germany whom I consulted hadn't a useful explanation.
2. Slater Memorial Debate, Bishop Cotton School, Shimla.

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a man... and this is about the length of a lemon tree's shadow an hour before sunset."

Among the essays included in the anthology Karl Miller's "Autobiographical Intents" treads the razor's edge of fiction and autobiography. Autobiography has become an issue in contemporary writing and Booker Prize judges have to spend time deciding whether a short-listed novel is a novel or a memoir, that is, whether it is fiction or non-fiction.

Blake Morrison's two books, *And When Did You Last See Your Father* and *As If*, the more recent one about the murder of the two year old James Bulger, have been seen as "intruded" autobiography. Miller feels that just as in the *genre* of the novel, a novel can be both realistic and romantic, likewise, in the *genre* of autobiography "boundary-crossing" is possible. The trick is to do it well like Homer did by making the *Odyssey* both epic and romance. When I read pieces like "Autobiographical Intents" I get the nagging feeling that with so much adept boundary-crossing and the enabling breaking down of categories, is the English Department critic becoming *passé*?

I'm sure British writers are excited that the British Council's Literature Department has responded "to the strong interest in the newest British writing overseas" and has had the verve and the energy to provide them with this forum. In late 1996, the British Council's Literature Department in New Delhi sent out circulars to Indian writers in English inviting them to write for a similar sort of a compilation which would "reflect Indian and British views of Modern India, independent since 1947." The circular claimed that "a publishing house with a strong presence in world book trade [would] be responsible for promotions." I wonder, what happened to the venture? Petered out like the "high-mortality-rate" Indian-English Poetry?

Smita Agarwal is a writer. A selection of her poems appears in Nine Indian Women Poets, *Oxford University Press*

Vibrant Cameos

Anupama Prabhala Kapse

THE VIRGIN SYNDROME: A NOVEL

By Rani Dharker

Penguin India, 1997, pp. 196, Rs. 200.00

Indian English fiction, it is generally agreed, has found its niche in the global market. But one wonders how much business Rani Dharker's *The Virgin Syndrome* will do in India. What else can one expect from a clumsy and tasteless pot-pourri of Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan and Shobha De'?

What then is the *Virgin Syndrome*? A novel, as the subtitle seems compelled to tell us. A sheltering yet threatening presence dominating the lives of the many women of the novel; mothers, aunts, grand-aunts, grandmothers, cousins, friends, and goddesses: "The Virgin Syndrome is the obsessive desire to remain a virgin—not to be confused with frigidity—. . . it ran in our veins, bled when we bled... It governed our laughter, turned on our tears.' Given such a topos, the rite of passage of the unnamed heroine could well translate into the question. 'To be a feminist. . . or not to be?' To be, of course, is the politically correct answer. The plot then takes a predictable turn to demonstrate the acquiring of such an identity by its heroine. And shouldn't love provide the fertile space to play out the drama of this virtuous quest? So she is plunged headlong into an affair with a Kashmiri student leader at college, which, to use a phrase of the author, 'positively reeks' of the Shobha Des, inspite of riders such as 'Raina gave me an impatient push and I was lying on the bed, spread-eagled, the feminist, horizontal, post-modernist version of the crucifixion' which just makes the prose hopelessly tangled. And then we are told that inspite of Raina's sexual failure, she gets pregnant because of his enterprising sperm: 'Thus for the second time in the history of mankind there was the Immaculate Conception.'

Next, an abortion, supervised by her mother and the matriarch of the house, Aima, ensures that the pregnancy is terminated by the administering of various "hot foods", especially *til* laddoos made for Sankrant. Incredibly, at twenty-five, it is only through *Life* magazine that the heroine finds out how pregnancy occurs. Worse, only at the operation table, in stirrups for curetting does she realize that she must have been pregnant. Such an experience is explosive fictional material, but Dharker's prose is unimaginative, the humour *passé* and the handling of the plot perfunctory. Neither does she explore adequately questions of gender, and the repression of sexuality which lurk beneath the surface or even the implication of female infanticide here (all the women in her family are cursed to deliver only female children). Her discursive tendencies are so strong and the language so turgid, that the plot continues to unfold in an assembly-line fashion, the next issue being marriage. 'Like all Indian girls. . . like Alice in Wonderland, through Lacan's mirror to the Symbolic order, I thought that I would get married the minute I finished my M.A." More contrivances of the plot follow. The heroine teaches at a school, works as a copywriter in an ad agency, burns fur coats, turns vegetarian, doesn't smoke or drink, doesn't have affairs with married men, and waits for love, all with unfaltering crusading zeal.

In doing so, Dharker dabbles with the alienation of a westernized Indian in a provincial school whose academic staff is pompous, corrupt and ritual-ridden; a campus novel atmosphere, clearly drawing from her own experiences as a teacher of English Literature; and with the glitzy, unequal, yet glamourous world of Bombay. To add to all this, there are frequent attempts at fabulism, magic and realism (sic), stories of witches and lesbians, tales from Indian mythology; of Shiva and Parvati, Radha and Krishna, and the disjunctive Memories of Siddharth whose explanation is withheld until much later. There is frequent capitalization, dropping of punctuation marks and conflation of nouns. In between, there are 'Seven Conversations and One Story', a 'U.P. Dowry Formula', 'The Strange Case of Dr. Singhal and Mrs. Mayid: The Hunchback of Singledoom'; these strategies of narrative, instead of layering it, merely make it a poor pastiche. Far more enriching is the account of 'The Virgin Bride [who] Turns into Good Widow'; Rukmabai, a revolutionary doctor and cause celebre of the reform movement in late nineteenth century Maharashtra, but who had donned the widow's white inspite of never having lived with her husband. This complements a moving account of her own aunt Sumitramami's violent marital life and the conventional widowhood after that. Dharker's aunts and uncles are refreshingly real in comparison with the flat cardboard characters of the outside world. There is an Aunt-Who-Has-All-The-Answers, a Favourite Aunt, the narrow-minded Laxmimami, the pathetic Nirmalamama who wants to be perpetually young and models herself after the MTV generation and the mad aunt Dolly who gets electrocuted in trying to purify a switch. Then there are the kindly Yashwantmama with a twinkle in his eye, the cynical philistine Dinankarmama and his quarrelling wife Narmadamami, the wife-beating Rajeshmama and his long-suffering wife Sumitramami, and the inauspicious widow, grand-aunt Pandhrimami, whose name means the colour white and who brings death wherever she goes, all vibrant cameos who form a psychological backdrop to the heroine's consciousness. One would have liked to see more of them.

For all these stylistic attempts which are hardly innovative, reading *The Virgin Syndrome* is a largely cold and insipid experience. However hard it tries to distinguish itself from other Indian writing in English, it lacks a cohesive emotional core. Key episodes relating to the heroine's attempts to come to terms with her own sexuality are hopelessly obvious even as Dharker struggles to bring new depth and dimensions to her. Supposedly, the *til gud* death of the heroine's unborn child triggers off her adult life. But the link between her experiences as a schoolteacher and her experiences as a woman is a facile one. Witness one such episode. At the school, when girls between the ages of thirteen and sixteen suddenly mysteriously begin hiccupping, shivering, and faint, it is only the heroine who can see through it: 'It's so plain... It's not witchcraft at all. It's just a strange case of sexual awakening. . . You remember the screaming girls in *The Crucible*? Dancing naked in the woods? . . . repression can take all kinds of strange forms'. Enter the spirit slayer to deflect all such evil, and you have the occult of the orient thrown in for good measure, passing off as the oppressive

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cultural presence of Hindu rituals. And later there is Chhaya Shastri, another weirdo concocted by overflowing creative juices, to tell her that she is cursed by a husband from a previous birth, and that the only way for her is through faithful bathing with milk and water of the Shiva lingam.

Needless to say, she resigns from her first job. Anxious to exorcise Raina's sexual failure and her own frigidity, she rejects the town for the city, in search of freedom. On her way, in a classic re-enactment of the damsel in distress situation, she is rescued by the 'Adonis' Shyam Gupta and falls for him, after causing a near accident in trying to rescue chicken headed for slaughter. 'Mea culpa', she apologizes for her own sexual desire. Here, the binary opposition between 'good' and 'freak' women siphons off other forms of female resistance. Morever, the cliched and Hindi film style rendition of the affair with a boy 'who does not respect girls who do' avoids alternative feminine ideals. If Shyam Gupta, the engineer way down the U.P. dowry list, wasn't bad enough, Bombay is a Medusa city, 'a city of erections, hard cash its orgasm'. Her workplace is full of lecherous, insensitive men who want her to con consumers into buying yummy pork. Her home is the Y.W.C.A. hostel, and her roommate a British girl with an Indian fiance, a girl whose strangeness is accentuated by her having 'no breasts but scars'. And then there is Prema, a high class call-girl, who is engaged to be married, but searches for money and fun. It seems that nothing can be normal anymore.

Unable to sell yummy pork, she becomes a lecturer of English, and waxes eloquent on everything from politics, women, postcoloniality, population and copulation, not to mention the sorry state of the academia. Her actions speak even louder than her words. She tries to save her cousin from a forced marriage only to be told to mind her own business. At a seminar she fights tooth and nail for a clean bathroom for her colleagues with no thanks from them and acquires the label of a dangerous feminist. She fasts to help a colleague against the oppression of the V.C. only to lose her job. She tries to stop a riot in the old city, only to be hit on the head.

Again, promising material for the exploration of a self that tries to break out of love, marriage and family, the traditional co-ordinates of female identity, but again frittered away by the author. The problem is that Dharker is unable to differentiate between her own internalization of popular icons and stereotypes and her heroine's. Hence what could have been a valuable tool for exploring her heroine's neurosis

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crumbles under its own rhetoric, unable to keep up its ambitious project of unravelling the awakening and the acquisition of selfhood of its heroine. The promising opening line 'The day I fell on the pavement, and sat back on my haunches, peering at my toenails, I knew I had changed', raises expectations that Dharker is unable to sustain. In spite of her attempts to be different, the heroine is reduced to playing out a repertoire of conventional female mannerisms: a longing for Krishna, unhappiness and failure in love, crying in Siddharth's arms, being propositioned by men. What is even more problematic is her constant self-objectification as the golden-hued abundantly endowed desirable female, couched in a language derived from popular romantic fiction, soap operas and T.V. advertisements, the very institutions the novel onstensibly seeks to critique. Not only does the novel fight shy of adequately answering questions like 'What is the nature of happiness for a single unmarried Indian woman in contemporary India?', it also cuts us off frequently from the protagonist's subjectivity through its breathless sequencing of event after event. Each episode is given equal weight and not much substance, characters move aimlessly in and out of the narrative, which in trying to be audacious ends up as excessive. The discourse of the popular clutters up a much more flowing and textured symbolic discourse of Aima's tapestry of the world and its associated network of images and tropes such as the Curse and the Great Flood.

Aima's tapestry of the world is a welcome antidote to the arid landscape of the rest of the novel. She weaves, swinging to and fro, motifs from the world of nature: flowers, animals, birds. The to and fro motion of her swing is an evocative metaphor for the closeness she enjoys with cyclical time; it is both static and kinetic. Aima's portrait is indeed memorable and enjoys pride of place in the novel. Her elevated position on the swing provides glimpses of her tranquility and her closeness to ancient wisdom. Dignified yet frail, wise but trapped by tradition, loved and hated, a stalwart of a lost world, she is both victim and vehicle of the Virgin Syndrome. Yet, here, too, Dharker is controlled by rather than in control of her work. A potentially rich subtext of rebellion and vindication, which would have augured well for Dharker's feminist agenda, is left untapped. For Aima hardly ever speaks, she only says *nako*. While this is a resonant signifier of negation, loss and the denial of a rapidly changing world, it also effectively silences her, foreclosing material and historical spaces, links and breakages with the past which would have enhanced the rewriting of selfhood. Aima is, metonymically, Aashiyana, the *wada*, the stone mansion at the centre of the town, an upper-caste, upper-class inheritance. It protects but also imprisons her family of daughters. Its exclusivity exerts a pervasive pressure on the novel, so much so that not much else can be permitted into it. Nevertheless, the blood spots around which Aima embroiders flowers speak of pain and suffering faced after early widowhood. They are ample metaphors of silence and its creative use.

Fittingly, it is this aspect of Aima which the protagonist identifies most with. She has tried and rejected many careers. Besides, 'men leave [her] cold now'. What she likes is to do now is to draw trees, of various hues, contours and sizes, but only trees, as silent as Aima's tapestry. Dharker delivers with ease here, almost as if she too is equally disenchanted with the written word or the labyrinth of language, and chooses a quiet, unostentatious style. It eases the burden of the plot; the trees provide soccour, fulfillment and an identity the protagonist quests. However, it is a temporary hiatus. Transformed, she now finds the Siddharth of her memories, who presents her with an exquisite fibre-glass tree, the kind she would have loved to make. Sadly, this elegantly written strand of narrative is lost as the abstract artistic passion is subsumed by the increasingly trite vocabulary of love and romantic longing for a younger man, and the world of Mick Jagger and Princess Margaret, Elizabeth Taylor and Larry Fortenky, and Samuel Johnson and Elizabeth Porter, all rolled into one, crashes back into the text. Dharker is unable to steer her fiction away from a conventional closure of love. This is identity predicated on romantic union, although it avoids marriage. But it remains only that.

But *The Virgin Syndrome* does not leave the reader here. Instead, there is a great Fire which consumes Aashiyana, putting an end to the vile machinations of uncles and aunts trying to sell it off at a high premium. Add to this the death of MammaDaddy in a car crash and the rebirth of the heroine is complete. Nothing short of a total break with the past will ensure it. 'I walked through the fire. The flames parted for me, making a path. . .' The world, which was saved from the Great Flood, can no longer resist the new forces which drive it. The benign presence of MammaDaddy, inspite of their desire to accommodate the new, can no longer survive. The tapestry of the world burns the fastest, the embers flying in her face. There is no grandfather, no mermaid to rescue it. The new world provides choices for its women, but only at the cost of an orgy of destruction. The burden of tradition is gone, and so is the benevolent protection of patriarchy. However, if this is a myth of creation, then the new India has to be rejected, for Siddharth lives in London where she must go, choosing the expatriate alternative. Dharker hurries the heroine to fulfillment having waited the entire length of the novel. In her anxiety to provide a happy ending, she suppresses disturbing elements which threaten to destabilize her fiction. Consequently, she writes an involved account of the courtship and the fire in quick succession, pushing the novel to its climax, but makes no subjective connections between these momentous sequences. In the end, there is no happiness or loss but a telling emptiness produced by a floundering sensibility.

Perhaps it were these very elements which contributed to the nomination of *The Virgin Syndrome* for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in the Best First Novel category. But the framework of fable, myth, ritual, exotic locale, and *bhasha* words must be used judiciously by Indian English fiction, else it runs the risk of being cheapened by its own cultural and artistic foundations. One expects more from Dharker in her next venture than what the Penguin publishing machine has produced.

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Nascent Modernity

Vibha S. Chauhan

HYENA AND OTHER SHORT STORIES

By Chitra Mudgal. Translated from the Hindi by Deepa Aggarwal

Ocean Books, Delhi, 1998, pp. 165, Rs. 225.00

Chitra Mudgal's short stories present a close view of the north Indian countryside. Perhaps because she writes in Hindi and her reader is less urbanized than that of writers in English. The stories in *Hyena and Other Short Stories* cover a large social and geographical panorama—from villages and towns of Uttar Pradesh to the metropolitan cities of Delhi and Bombay. While many of her characters speak in *Khhadi-boli*, Chitra also uses the local dialect of each place, especially where the village is a component. This nativity in language substantially contributes to the creatively eloquent regional-cultural nuances in some stories in the collection under review. That also makes the translator's job indefinitely more daunting. Deepa Aggarwal, the translator, is bold enough to take up the task.

Chitra Mudgal raises questions more than she gives answers—or perhaps even attempts to answer. Taken as a whole, the stories in the present collection encompass two separate worlds—the rural and the metropolitan-urban, seemingly of the last three decades. These have also been the decades when social change acquired a faster pace, and yet remained decisively conditioned by the stubbornness of old social relations and norms. The consequent coexistence of the old and the new and its inevitable tensions and conflicts get crystallized in Chitra Mudgal's stories. She identifies the narrow domain of change, and at the same time traces out the unchanging assumptions about morality and ethics. She brings out the conventional perception of how individuals ought to play their social roles. Within this, she manages not to overlook the unquestioned acceptance of inequalities, or exploitation of the weak and the vulnerable. Such perceptions are held almost equally by those who still nourish fragments of pre-modern ideology along with flashes of modernity—those who belong to what, in absence of an adequate term, may be called the "middle class".

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In stories like "Pret" "Yoni", "Stepney", "Promotion", "The Matter Won't End Here", "Hunger" and "The Tiger", Chitra Mudgal turns her gaze towards the twilight zone of urban life, where modernization with its concomitant quality of individual dignity becomes at times a mere superficial gloss. It corrodes like rusted iron when brought in contact with the light of new influences that threaten to modify the basic orthodox foundations of society. This conjunction of two modes of contradictory yet coexisting mindsets results in a violence that tears down the veneer of apparent equality and human dignity of the individual—the two accepted pillars of modernity.

Stories like "Jagdamba Banu has come to the Village" and "Hyena" focus on the continuing world of patriarchy and gender class discrimination which forces itself into the domain of personal relationships with unambiguous vehemence and brutal force. The 'modern' social and political relations have not wholly bypassed the physical and mental realm of this rural configuration. Elements of the pre-modern structure that ensure continuity of the old system of oppression remain virtually as dominant as they were.

No wonder, violence in its various shades is the recurring motif in the stories. Besides its direct manifestation like unnatural deaths, communal pressures, rape, poverty, starvation deaths, simmering, subterranean violence exists even in situations of suspicions that exist between parents and children, husbands and wives, master and servant.

In "Pret Yoni", Neetu the young graduate student undergoes the trauma of a train accident and an attempted rape but she is still treated as a culprit by her family members. The underlying assumption and acceptance of the premodern role of the woman as a chaste wife and daughter dogs even the economically independent modern career woman. Stories like "Promotion" and "Stepney" deal with the pressures of a middle class, urban working woman. In "Promotion" Lalita realizes that the male dominated ethos is still reluctant to give the woman the due that is hers and believes that "if a woman gets ahead ... it's not her talent but a special favour granted (maybe for) using her body?" "Promotion" makes another career woman Abha painfully aware of the fact that her maid Batasha has successfully taken her place in running the household—perhaps has even become a substitute for a wife. Even after this realization, Abha can ill afford to let Batasha go. Her search for a career, childcare and economic independence makes her dependence on Batasha inevitable.

Emotional deception and exploitation of a trusting adolescent servant boy Motya becomes the focus of "The Matter Won't End Here". "Hunger" takes us directly into the world of the impoverished. Widowed and starving Laxma is forced to hire out her infant Chotu to a beggar woman who eventually starves him to death. "The Tiger" focuses on a unique kind of economics which only communalism can sustain.

The wide variety of themes and situations come to be unified by the inherently strong ground for an emotional empathy with the loser, not the winner. Such writing often faces the risk of being propogandist. Chitra Mudgal, however, has the artist's capability of constructing nuances and complexities that redeem her stories by defying an easy solution or over-simplified assumptions, which is what propoganda usually relies on.

The ambiguous endings of several of her stories shifts the focus from the immediate problem to a universalization of the issue at hand. It is not really important to be certain about all things. What is significant is not what finally happened, but the situation that leads on to it. The open endings thus have the ambiguity that enriches them, that invite the participation of the reader who comes to these stories with his own experience of society. Yet with the element of uncertainty of event, there co-exists a duality that conveys a crystal clear message of humanity.

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None of this of course would have been possible in the present book but for Deepa Aggarwal's success in translation. What makes a good translation cannot be adequately discussed here. More so because translation as a concept has lately become a subject of a well established debate. In case of the book under review, however, there is at least one inescapable task that the translator has to perform. She has to communicate to a readership at least a part of which may not be conversant with the human world in the north Indian countryside. She must build a bridge between the writer who wrote in Hindi and the reader who reads in English.

Deepa Aggarwal has done that quite faithfully. She attempts to create a language which is neither jarring like the cockeyed English, nor brutal in its attempt to be literal. She combines simple English with some fairly well known idioms both in English and Hindi to communicate the essence of the original, without in any way injuring its authenticity. Some words like *Jija, Bappa, Lota, Behini* remain unchanged.

Hyena and Other Short Stories also has a glossary at the end. One may argue at length about the merits and demerits of a glossary. It is however, certainly useful to have it in a book like the present one for even the Hindi speaking readers may be unaware of some of the local expressions used in the stories.

The book poses several problems about the contemporary rural as well as urban life. It involves the reader by raising questions and at times by even indicating the preferred solutions. It is fortunate that now the English readers too, will constitute a part of the readership of the book. A joyful journey in reading is assured.

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Genesis, Ethos, Growth

G. P. Deshpande

THE FIERY QUILL: NATIONALISM AND LITERATURE IN MAHARASHTRA

By B.G. Gokhale

Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1998, pp. xii & 190, Rs. 275.00

Professor Ghokhale who is Professor Emeritus of History and Asian Studies at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, has written extensively on Ancient India, Buddhism, British and American view of India and so on. He has a book on Samudra Gupta the forth century Emperor. The only book of his that the present reviewer has seen is his study of Poona of the eighteenth century. There are very few histories of cities in India. As such his study seemed to break new ground.

In the volume under review Professor Gokhale turns to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Marathi literature. In the first three chapters he gives us a genesis of nationalism in Maharashtra, its ethos and structure, and its growth from Chiplunkar (1850–1882) to Paranjape (1864–1929). In the last three chapters Professor Gokhale studies the historical novel, dramatic writing and poetry in the context of that nationalism. The accounts are based on the work of three novelists, seven playwrights and a few chosen early modern poets. He relates this writing to the emergence of modern nationalistic ideas in Maharashtra. He has also discussed essayists and historians like Chiplunkar, Paranjape and Rajwade. It is a useful, introductory volume.

The nationalism and nationalist inspiration that Professor Gokhale has in mind may be described as a traditional or restorative nationalism. The element of national glory has dominated these writers. Our subaltern historians would no doubt find fault with Professor Gokhale's view of nationalism although he does bring in ideas of Hobsbawm and others. He does not make the "congruence of the political and national unity and the role of ethnicity, religion, language, literature and history in the making of nationalism" sufficiently clear. Maharashtra's literary history is dominated by strong differences on all these aspects. Modern historians would question the emergence of nationalgeist (a term he borrows from Sir Isiah Berlin) which he perceives as rising in this period. A part of the difficulty would lie in the very nature of this nationalgeist which today's Dalit or a Grameen would see as upper-caste or Brahmanical geist.

It is perhaps Professor Gokhale's view of this nationalgeist that has resulted in his not taking notice of Phule as a poet and essayist. Obviously a title like Gulamgiri (Slavery) does not attract his attention in a book on nationalism and literature. He is content to note that the non-Brahamanical revolt "began in Pune through the ideas and activities of a great social reformer..... Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, by all accounts an extraordinary personality". Consequently one typical and representative attitude to imperialism and its contradiction with mainstream nationalism does not figure in his discussion.

Having said that I must reiterate that this is a good introductory volume. It would have been ideal if the book would have been available at a more affordable price than it actually is.

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A Votary of Life

Rabindra K. Swain

VERTICALS OF LIFE: SELECTED POEMS OF SACHI RAUT-RAY

Edited by Jayanta Mahapatra

Sahitya Akademi, 1996, pp. 166. Rs. 85.00

Reading the poems of Sachi Raut-Ray in English translation is going back into personal memory, racial past and Oriya literary history. It is to be reminded of a twelve-year boatman boy, a poem on whose martyrdom made Raut-Ray no less immortal than independence struggle, the blood and sweat of which one can feel in his poems. To think of Sachi Raut-Ray is naturally to think of the host of senior Oriya poets like Ramakanta Rath and Sitakanta Mahapatra who can never disown their lineage as poets to Sachi Raut-Ray.

It is befitting that a poet of stature like Jayanta Mahapatra should pay tribute to Sachi Raut-Ray by editing an anthology of his poems in English translation, *Verticals of Life: Selected Poems of Sachi Raut-Ray*. Even though Jayanta Mahapatra writes in English (of course, of late, in Oriya) Raut-Ray's poetry must have had its impact on his psyche as they belong to the same place, Cuttack, which was then the hub of political, cultural and literary activities of Orissa. Jayanta Mahapatra gives a nineteen-page introduction to this volume, in which he traces the early period of Sachi Raut-Ray, the making of him as a poet, evaluates his multi-faceted poetry and tries to find out the factors that determined his poetry. For this work of love, Mahapatra met the aged poet time and again and what lifts the introduction from a dry critical piece to a testament of reverence and documentation of rich literary heritage is Mahapatra's admiration of a father-figure of modern Oriya poetry. Take, for example, one such impression:

> I look at his eyes again, as I sit in front of him, and observe a tiredness that has overcome his frail limbs. But perhaps this is not the result of the natural course of ageing. Perhaps the changing world around him has contributed to it. Perhaps not, I do not know. His entire life has been one long struggle against the inhumanity he has encountered at different times and about which he could not do anything concrete (p. 18).

Out of the 73 poems in this volume, 23 are translated by Jayanta Mahaptra and the rest are by such able translators as Bibhu Padhi, Lakshmi Iyer Jayashree Mohanraj and also translations by two well known Oriya poets, J.P. Das and Rajendra Kishore Panda. Above all, like a jewel in the crown, this volume includes the forceful translation of Harindranath Chattopadhyay who did it as early as 1942 and made Raut-Ray accessible to a wider audience.

Sachi Raut-Ray is the harbinger of modern Oriya poetry, the greatness of whose work has been recognized by the Bharatiya Janpith in 1986. Setting him apart from his predecessors and showing how he broke away from the traditional way of Oriya poetry, Jayanta Mahapatra says,

> Surreal overtones and his exploration into the dreamscape of the unconscious gave his poetry a distinct newness, something unheard of in Oriya poets of the day. And inside all these shone his intense concerns for the people among whom he lived especially for the downtrodden and the oppressed. Nevertheless, his work was never done in any doctrainaire sense.

A poem like "Raja Jema" (The Princess) should introduce him more than any critique would:

> I am Sachi Raut-Ray
> (Not Tagore or Shelley)
> I am a poet of this earth and sky.
> I am not a professional singer.
> It is not my business
> To paint pictures on paper.

... what lifts the introduction from a dry critical piece to a testament of reverence and documentation of rich literary heritage is Mahapatra's admiration of a father-figure of modern Oriya poetry.

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When you open a book of mine
You'll feel the heart of a new man.
(Translated by Jayanta Mahapatra)

Raut-Ray's first collection of poems Patheya (Provisions for A Journey) was published when he was nineteen. But breaking new ground was yet to come. His awareness of the staple themes that were going to dominate his poetry later came to him with his gradual involvement with the events of his time. In 1930 he was almost expelled from school for joining the strike in the Satyagraha Movement. While studying in City College in Calcutta he worked for the Communist Party for which he was detained at Elysium Row and later in the Calcutta jail only to be released the morning the University examination was to begin. Returning to Orissa, his thoughts were immediately occupied with such forces as the Students' Movement, the Kissan Movement and the State People's Movement.

While he was active in such movements it was natural that the poems he wrote at that time should reflect his anger at the plight of the downtrodden. Even when he was fined Rs. 250 he did not stop. His inflammatory writings stirred the people of the remote hinterland of Orissa against feudal tyranny; his verse was on the lips of the people which emboldened them to even sacrifice their lives to police bullets. His poem "Mar Tu Jete Goli" (Shoot As Many Bullets As You Like) gave new impetus to the people of the Dhenkanal Praja Movement (1938–39). He sang, and with him the people:

Shoot as steadily as you can
Our breasts are bare and ready
for your bullets

It was at this time that a tragic incident took place which shook the entire state of Orissa. A twelve-year boy, Baji Raut used to support his mother by ferrying his little boat across the river Brahmani. One the night of October 13, 1938 he was posted by the the Praja Mandal, his people, to prevent the boat from being used by the police. The police retaliated by gunning the boy down for refusing to ferry them across. While the whole state burst into flames Sachi Raut-Ray gave expression, to the people's fury in his classic poem "Baji Raut". The translation of this poem carries well the original spirit:

(He) comes forever
In the world's yet unborn newcomers.
Mother each future babe
Returns your own to you.
In every triumph and defeat
His climbing footfalls beat
Making us dauntless in defeat
and wise in victory.
(Translated by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya)

Although the woes of the common people continued to be his principal concern gradually his poetry made shifts into different domains which include poems on light to contemplative moods, on love and death and on things commonplace or prophetic. In the changing times with shifting values the poet began to feel unsure of his identity:

How can I tell about myself
How can someone else either
When I do not myself know
Where I came from
Or where I am bound.
(Translated by J.P. Das)

But moments like this are fleeting. His poetry demonstrates that poetry is inseparable from the cultural and socio-political forces of the time in which it is written. He brought about a sort of "democratisation" of poetry, as Mahapatra says, by speaking of oppression and at the same time of emptiness and isolation of the world around him.

Above all, the exquisite lyricism in free verse which he brought into Oriya poetry has helped him occupy centre stage in the Oriya literary scene during the last five decades. From 1962 onwards, he has titled his collections of poetry merely as *Kavita 1962*, *1963* and so on. In one such collection *Kavita-1965* there is a poem "Ja Debi" in which speaking of the eternal theme of love and death, now in a Tantric mode, Raut-Ray emerges as one of the significant poets of the century:

And I live again, falling in love with her
My Sumbha-Nishumbha Existence only lives for her.
So she is a goddess, for how else,
Can she secure the slayed,
Death and Love, with strings of slaughter;
Because love is death, her order ultimate.
And receiving and giving seems complete
when each other we annihilate.
("Goddess Durga" translated by Jayanta Mahapatra)

Commenting on this poem, Jayanta Mahapatra says (with poems like this) "he could create an atmosphere of tone and voice that was rarely in evidence in Orissa, perhaps in the rest of the country as well" (p. 17).

Rabindra K Swain works for the Orissa Gazetteers in Bhubaneshwar.

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Indira Chowdhury
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Manohar in association with The Book Review Literary Trust, 1998, pp. 304, Rs.230.00

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Gerards Print Shop, Wattala, 1998, pp. 62, price not mentioned

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Sahitya Akademi, 1997, pp. 874, Rs. 450.00

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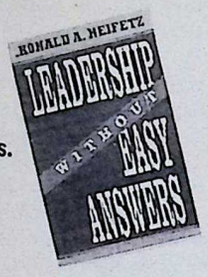

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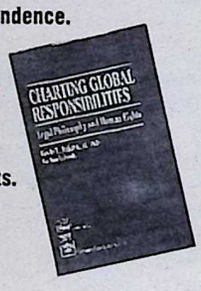

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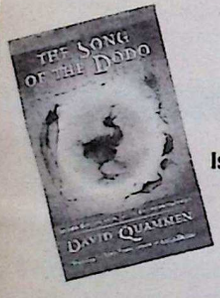

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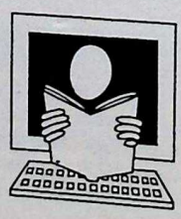

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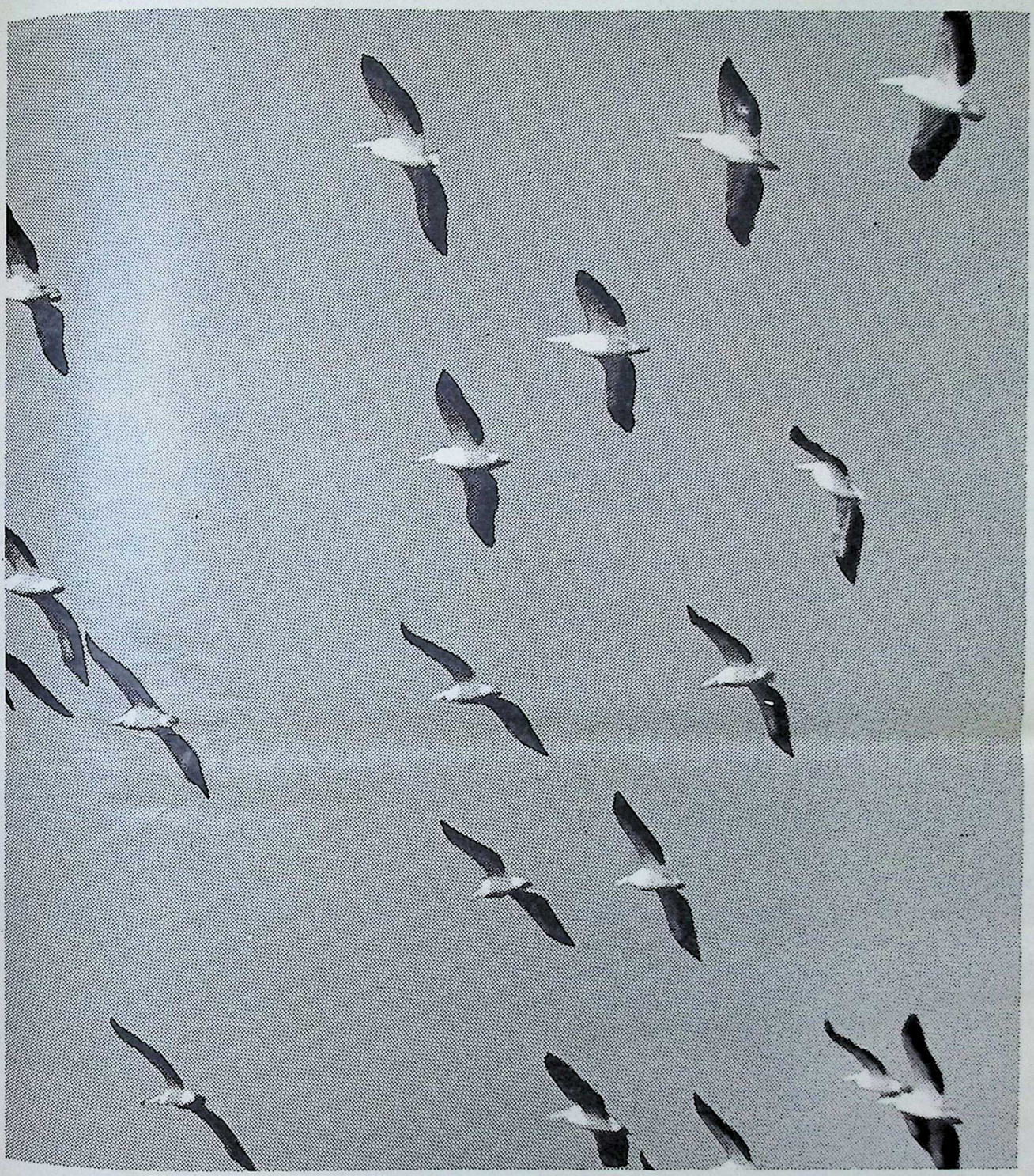

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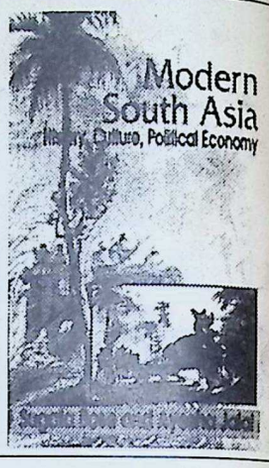

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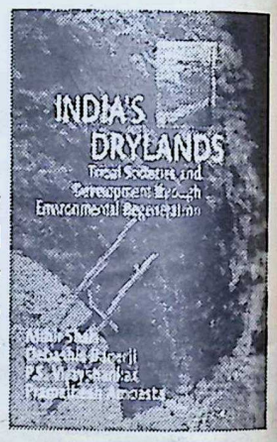

India's Drylands
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Mihir Shah / Debashis Banerji / P.S. Vijayshankar & Pramathesh Ambasta

The book is rich for both its analytical depth and empirical vigour as the authors show how agricultural growth and employment planning can and must be based on environmental regeneration of the drylands of India. For this, a location-specific biomass optimization strategy based on total watershed planning needs to be adopted. The book not only outlines the qualitative contours of such an innovative strategy, but an attempt is also made to quantify its productivity and employment-enhancing potential.

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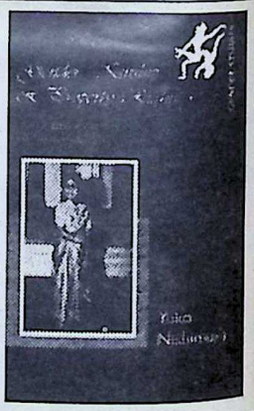

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Nagarattar Womanhood in South India
Yuko Nishimura

Based on intensive fieldwork, this book is an ethnography of a prominent mercantile caste — the Nagarattar — in Tamil Nadu, South India. It provides a contemporary, gendered perspective to a subject of long-standing scrutiny An eminently readable book, *Gender, Kinship and Property Rights* serves as a good introduction to South Indian kinship in a contemporary context.

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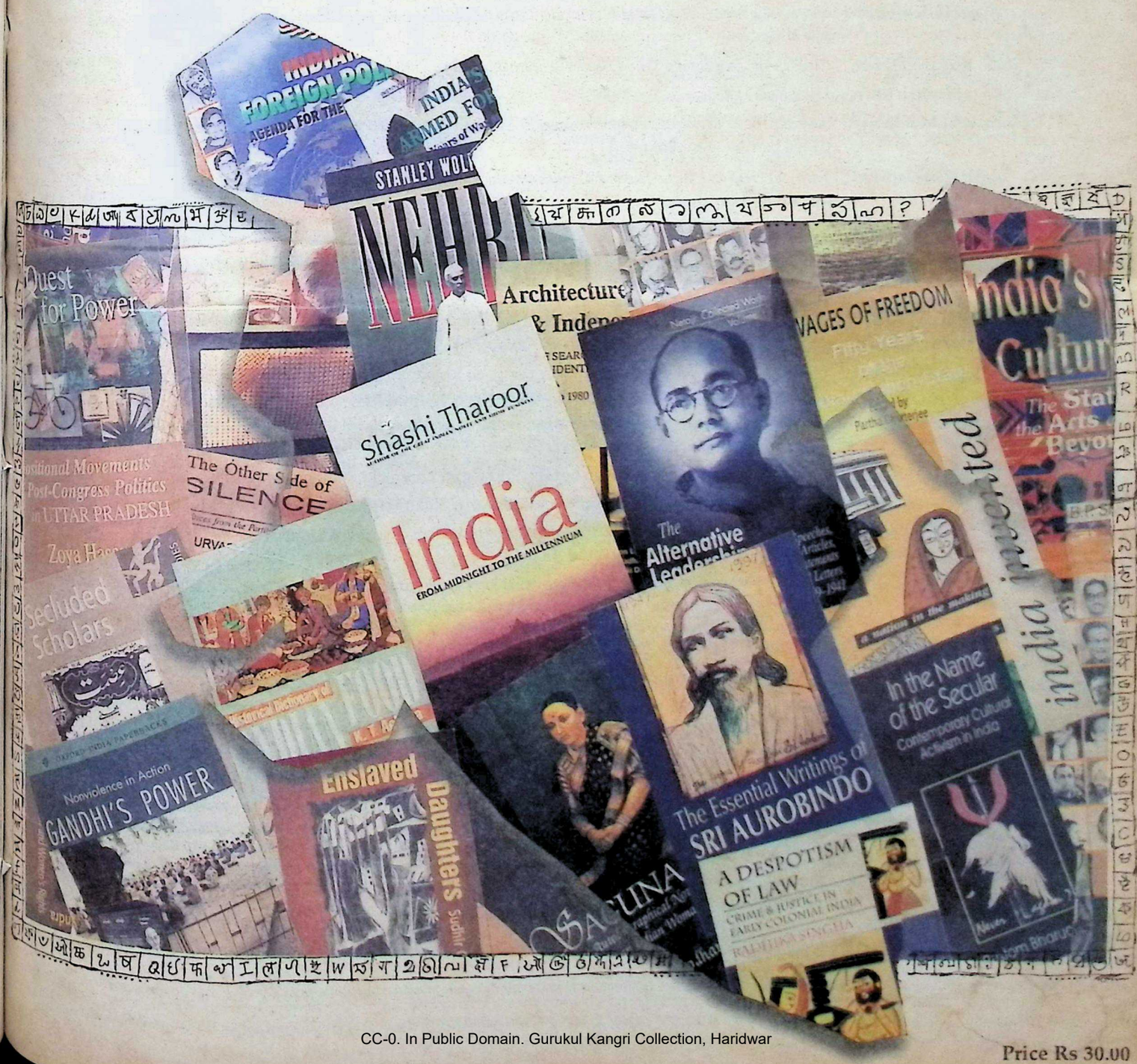

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Nikhil Chakravartty—*A Tribute*

We, Chandra Chari, Uma Iyengar and Chitra Narayanan, Trustees of The Book Review Literary Trust, wish to record our deep sense of loss at the demise of Nikhil Chakravartty, a doyen of Indian journalism. For *The Book Review*, his generosity of spirit has meant its continued existence over twenty-two years. But for his spontaneous decision to take over and run the journal from 1978 to 1989, *The Book Review* may have well faced extinction within two years of being born. It is a matter of great pride for us that Nikhil Chakravartty's contribution to *The Book Review* was included in his B.D. Goenka Award citation.

Nikhil Chakravartty was a mentor and guide and his fearless journalism has been a role model for us in the running of *The Book Review*. His going creates a permanent void on our Advisory Board. We pay our homage to the exemplary human being that he was.

Chandra Chari Uma Iyengar Chitra Narayanan

It was in 1963 that I met Nikhil Chakravartty for the first time. I had just taken over as Director of the China Division in the Ministry of External Affairs. He came to see me in his capacity as a journalist, as someone who knew China and was deeply interested in Sino-Indian relations. From this very first encounter I was attracted by his unassuming ways, his vast knowledge of things, his insights into people and politics, his keen intellect and power of analysis, the quiet sense of humour that enlivened his conversation and the deep humanity that broke out through his Socialist argumentations. Very soon we became friends and our families became friends.

In 1975 when Chandra Chari, Uma Iyengar and my daughter Chitra ventured on starting *The Book Review* Nikhilda was one of the enthusiastic supporters of the project. Later when *The Book Review* was facing a crisis of publication it was he who took it over and published it from his Perspective Publications and kept it going for ten long years. When the three founding women editors were able to take over the publication, Nikhilda returned it to them and with a financial contribution. Nikhilda was in a real sense the foster parent of *The Book Review*.

I recall vividly Nikhil's visit to Beijing when I was at the Embassy there and his stay with us in 1978. He was visiting Beijing after many years. It was interesting to see how he traced out some of his old friends in Beijing and how warmly they received him and entertained him. He had so many memories and stories to tell of the old golden days of India-China friendship under Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai. We went together to see the famous Dazhai commune, and of course, the splendid monuments of Beijing. His observations of China of the time were acute and educative. As a guest he was the easiest and the most delightful to look after.

On return to India we picked up the old threads of friendship with the Chakravartty family. By this time I was a non-official—Vice Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. I discovered that as a non-official it was easier to deal with Nikhilda. He was indeed a born non-official. We came closer to each other during this period. I discovered how fond he was, though very undemonstratively, of his son Sumit and his grandson whom he called Mithi. His wife, Renu, was for him a life-companion, for she had been a colleague and a comrade as well, an active and equal participant in several initiatives, political and social. Her passing away was a blow to him; he did not show his grief and did not permit it to impede his work and mission in life. But I think he was not quite the same after the death of Renu.

When I became the Vice President he still used to visit us very frequently. But he was never at ease with officialdom and meticulously avoided attending all official parties, unless it had some connection with his profession—journalism. I invited him several times to join on my foreign visits, but he was not interested. When I was making an official visit to Iran in 1996 I told him that I would like to take Sumit with the group of journalists accompanying me. To my surprise he replied "Why not his father?". This was the first time Nikhil had suggested anything for himself. He came with me along with Katyal of *The Hindu*, Saeed Naqvi and Zahid Ali Khan. It was a most rewarding experience for me to be with him on an official trip. We went to Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz. Nikhil's observations of Iran were most enlightening, he sensed with an uncanny instinct the change that was in the making in Iranian society.

A conversation with Nikhilda was liberal education—sometimes it was a revolutionary education. New facets of issues used to show up. And his recollections of Indian personalities, leaders and events were amazingly rich, throwing new light on the personalities and on the history of the nationalist movement and the post-independence period. I used to ask Nikhil why he did not record his conversations because they were things he would not jot down on paper. Now they are lost irretrievably.

Everyone knew that Nikhil Chakravartty was a Socialist. But he was a democrat among socialists and a socialist among democrats. For him democracy and socialism were inseparable. He strove through his chosen medium of journalism to keep the nation attuned to the national imperative of social justice and the international imperative of equality among nations. He spoke as he thought, simply; he wrote as he spoke, clearly; but both were thought-provoking and scintillating. Not for Nikhilda is the glib phrase, the shallow one-liner, the hidden jibe. Not for him the praise of authority or the medallion of public favour. Nikhil Chakravartty believed that journalism was a calling, not just a profession, much less a lucrative business.

The fact that his weekly the *Mainstream* has not only survived through the years, but flourished as a journal, spreading his ideas and outlook on politics and social affairs, not in any exclusive manner but in the welter of different ideas and opinions that found place in its pages, is a testimony and a tribute to his purposiveness in the midst of his myriad-minded interests and concerns. Among the many contributions he has bequeathed to us the *Mainstream* is unique. That he has left it in the young and able hands of Sumit Chakravartty is a matter of pride and solace to all his friends who cherish unforgettable memories of this lovable and humane personality, this unpretentious intellectual, this unassuming crusader for progressive causes, and this gentle giant of journalism of the twentieth century.

K.R. Narayanan President of India

On the passing of Nikhil Chakravartty I mourn the loss of not only a first rate journalist but an old family friend. We had known him since the mid-thirties when he was an undergraduate in the Presidency College in Calcutta, and he had been a personal friend since 1961, when he saw me to express his approval of the Indian stand of the historical position in the border dispute with China. Recognizing that I was, in his own words, "not one of us", yet his friendship surmounted party loyalty. In *Mainstream*, which he founded and built up into one of the leading journals of Delhi as an outspoken voice of "progressive nationalism", he published whatever I wrote, serious or trivial, and I could rely on him for his partisanship. In the penultimate years before the transfer of power, he had been a reasoned spokesman for the right course; and in the fifty years of Independence, he had represented all thoughtful Indians who loved freedom and were prepared to do all they could to defend and safeguard it. His was a voice of sanity and common sense amid the increasing turmoil.

Nikhil was a familiar figure in Delhi, moving freely among high and low, and he will be sorely missed. His unflinching loyalty to the right persons, his unswerving commitment to noble ends and his unfailing comment drawing our attention to what is correct in our country and abroad are rare talents which he has passed onto his son, who shares his ideas and ideals. Some years before his death, he transferred to him the editorship of his journal. So we look forward to the continuance of the Nikhil tradition.

S. Gopal

It is only with time that the magnitude of the void created by Nikhil Chakravartty's passing becomes clear to some of us. Initially, we took the news with resignation; sorrow was tempered by the realization that he was terminally ill and it was a matter of time. Gradually, however, the implications of the loss to India's fractured media of perhaps its most commanding moral presence begins to gnaw. Whose sober counsel, whose voice of wisdom stemming from a non-negotiable commitment to values would now prevail?

Nikhil Chakaravartty, to most of us Nikhilda, a form of reference and direct address in Bengali which signifies an elder brother, commanded respect not by his intimidating presence. He was laid back and avuncular. He had a sharp and dry sense of humour and a mischievous twinkle in his eyes invariably preceded its expression. He never raised his voice or thrust himself centre-stage. It was his impeccable personal conduct and the commitment to truth and values that characterized his journalism, which gave him his stature. It was this commitment which prompted him to close down the *Mainstream*, the weekly he founded and painstakingly turned into a respected organ of discourse, during the dark period of the Emergency (1975–77) when he could not publish what he wanted to.

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Nikhilda's visceral morality was shaped partly by the Brahmo Samaj, to which his family belonged and which was known for its emphasis on a life of high rectitude and an almost puritanical austerity, and Marxism, a philosophy of elemental outrage against the inequities of unbridled 19th century capitalism. He came under the spell of Marxism, whose morality is rooted in its concern for social justice, during his days in Oxford which, along with that other great British University, Cambridge was a nursery of young communists in the 1930s. Returning to India, he shunned the arm chair and plunged into militant activity, going underground when the Communist Party of India was banned following its switch to an insurrectionary line after its Second Congress in Calcutta in February-March, 1948.

It was not just Nikhilda who was active in the CPI. His wife, Renu Chakravartty, a niece of Dr. B.C. Roy, West Bengal's highly respected patrician Chief Minister, was a member of the Lok Sabha, for several terms, and an articulate and skilled parliamentarian. Nikhilda, however was never shackled by his ideology and party and strongly criticized the latter whenever he thought it necessary. He was deeply troubled by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Sino-Indian border clashes in 1962, and the acrimonious splitting of the undivided Communist Party of India in 1964 with the CPI(M) emerging as a new party. Equally painful to him was the disclosure of Joseph Stalin's monstrous crimes by Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, the Sino-Soviet schism, the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's lurch toward a market economy.

Yet Nikhil-da's was never a case of *The God That Failed;* he was too much of a rationalist to have any god—neither Marx nor any other. As he slowly drifted away from the party, he evolved his *weltanschauung* in which Marxism was tempered by humanism and pluralism and a commitment to libertarian values. The *Mainstream*, which he resurrected after the Emergency, and turned into a highly respected journal of discourse, reflected this in its content which was marked by a remarkable diversity of ideological positions and wide-ranging polemic of a high quality. It also mirrored his deep concern over the decline in the level of political discourse in India and the growing trivilization and criminalization of politics under the influence of consumer culture and the market economy. Yet he did not give up hope; nor did he become cynical and embittered but waged a relentless war, not only through *Mainstream* but the incisive and highly respected syndicated political column he wrote.

It is hardly surprising, journalism which he took up after teaching college for a spell on his return from Oxford, became his principal avocation. And he became the natural leader of his profession. He was active for years in the Editors' Guild of India whose president he was at one time. An unfailing champion of the freedom of the Press, he actively defended it both in the Press Council of India, of which he was a member, and in movements launched by journalists, displaying even when he had crossed eighty, a reserve of energy which shamed many decades younger.

His last assignment was as Chairman of Prasar Bharati, the autonomous Corporation that the Gujral government had created by an Ordinance to supervise the functioning of *Doordarshan* All-India Radio which too had been liberated from government control. It was not an easy task and involved dealing with not only the ethos of a new broadcasting and telecasting culture, but multitudinous administrative issues. He brought to it the same application and sense of fairplay which he displayed in all the diverse functions he had discharged in his life.

With his passing, *Prasar Bharati* has lost its gentle and wise guiding hand and Indian journalism its tallest protagonist. It is a tragedy that this should happen when the media has been thrown into a deep crisis by the advent of the consumer culture and the market economy.

Hiranmay Karlekar

Some two years before his death, Nikhilda made one last trip to the Uttarakhand hills that he loved to visit. He told me happily how he enjoyed riding the new train to Kathgodam, and then hiring a taxi and driving up to Munsiyari. 'But when did you plant it?' I asked aghast, knowing fully well at the various risks involved in travelling unescorted and without obtaining the necessary reservations along the route. 'Oh I just risked it', he said with a twinkle, 'that was the really enjoyable part'.

The more one saw and read of Nikhilda and his writings, the more convinced one became that his relentless nomadism lay at the heart of his very humane and very informative journalism. The most convincing analysts of the culturally and politically complex nature of the real India, have been men and women who, for one reason or another, were great travellers: Buddha, Mahavira, Baanbhatt, the poet, and nearer our time, Gandhi.

Charaiveti, Charaiveti—move! move! said the Vedas. 'Roam the earth fearless as a rhino,' Buddha advised his disciples. It is such wanderings that re-establish the harmony between man and nature, between a journalist and his stories; between a elder journalist and a younger one.

At 84, Nikhilda was a national institution, but an institution of a very unpredictable sort. Sometimes when he was consulted as an oracle, his replies disappointed and bewildered the askers; because he, as a rational man, disliked any aura of mysticism around either political events or his own persona as a journalist. He had witnessed and participated in great events in our history, and he alone could also tell you with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, that the now famous 'each time a big tree falls, the earth shakes' image of Rajiv's was actually derived from one of his Nana's speeches delivered at the death of C. Rajagopalachari, and that a certain senior CPI(M) leader had taken forty years to overcome his shyness and propose to his lady love.

Without attempting to enter and operate in their world as an insider, he sympathized with all out-groups, including the OBCs, and stood up for their political and human rights. But he saw through the naiveté of exaggerating the importance of the caste struggle at the expense of national unity. He believed firmly that social justice best obtained in a nation that has a stable polity, and a sound system of justice.

What made Nikhil Da an invaluable presence for the likes of us eventually, weren only his writings. His life is a masterpiece for all aspiring journalists. He lived out the fears and hopes of a truly liberal and honest intellectual in India of the late 20th century and proved that man alone will outlive the threat of his extinction. His restlessness brought him out of the confines of his early academic life, and thereafter he refused the final luxury of a religious or political creed. In this he stands unique and alone.

Mrinal Pan

My acquaintance with Nikhil Chakravartty began in the mid-sixties when I was working with the *Hindustan Times, Mainstream* had just been launched and my Left friends had introduced me to the journal and, a little later, to Nikhil himself. He had not yet become the father figure he had since, and even though I was much younger him, pride would not let me address him as 'Nikhilda' as others had even then started to do. He was still a distant figure to me, though friends in *Patriot*, just born and at combative best, constantly spoke of him. It was only when the Emergency was imposed in 1975 and the Indian Press was under siege that I came to know him better. That began an association which I have counted as one of the best things to have happened to me. On my part it was part awe and part slowly maturing affection. On his part gave generously of his enormous reserves of friendship—to which anyone who knew him more than slightly will readily testify.

In these twenty-five years, we have met countless number of times, and on occasions, worked together. The years he was President of the Editors Guild were the most active of that rather lackadaisical body. Under his guidance the Guild accomplished a great deal more than rhetoric about the 'Freedom of the Press'. On behalf of the Guild, we travelled together more than once to the then turbulent Punjab.

On his return from Oxford in the early forties and after a couple of false starts including a stint in academia, Nikhil chose the one profession that was tailor made for him. He had few peers in journalism, especially commentative journalism. His commitment to the freedom of the press was total and his norms of professional ethics were of the strictest. People who have only read him would not know that what appeared in print was only a miniscule fraction of what he knew. His knowledge of affairs especially Indian politics and its dynamics, was astonishing. There was no one of any consequence in the Indian public life he did not know and who did not readily, even eagerly, share confidences with him. Leaders of all political parties spoke to him free with the total trust that he would not betray their dark secrets. He did not eke his columns out with these whispered confidences as others, anxious to show off their rubbing shoulders with the high and mighty, often did.

His intellectual range was astonishing, though he wore his learning lightly. This and his knowledge of affairs he shared with me much to my enrichment. He had a certain dry ironic wit that he held under check in his public writing but his conversation with friends sparkled with this sardonic humour.

Nikhil was a life long Leftist in politics but an undeceived one. Often his writings irked official Communists but none dared question his intellectual honesty, public purpose and commitment to India that shone through everything he did or wrote. Almost alone among commentators on public affairs he once pleaded for a national government, seeing in it the only solution to the immobilism and confusion caused by a fragmented political electoral verdict.

Books were a special interest of Nikhil and his contribution to the growth and stabilization of *The Book Review* will be gratefully acknowledged by all those associated with it. His loss is a deeply personally one to me and to everyone who knew him.

N.S. Jagannath

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Drawing Up A Balance Sheet

Neera Chandhoke

AGES OF FREEDOM: FIFTY YEARS OF THE INDIAN NATION STATE
Edited by Partha Chatterjee
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 327, Rs. 545.00

CONTEMPORARY INDIA: G.R. BHATKAL MEMORIAL LECTURES 1975–1995
Compiled and edited by Sadanand Bhatkal
Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1998, pp. 246, Rs. 300.00

Every polity has to—at historically significant moments—take stock of as well as assess its past and present experience, in order to decide which direction it wants to go in. As we stand poised to enter fifty-one years of India's independent history, such a moment seems to have arisen in our polity today. For whereas more than half a century of experimentation with democracy has consolidated gains, it has as well thrown up intractable problems. Some of the contributions in the two edited books concentrate on the problems, none concentrate only on the gains, and some concentrate on both. Therefore, some of the authors are excessively critical, some are balanced, though none is laudatory. This arouses some melancholy, for India set to forge her post-independence destiny with a great deal of hope and tremendous enthusiasm. As Rajni Kothari in the first volume under review puts it, India under the leadership of Nehru sought to build a pluralist democracy—"bearing nothing but the future in mind and leaving the debris of the past behind, and engaging in the dream' of building a new India through economic development and social change undertaken by the instrumentality of the new state, reducing in the process the pains of extreme poverty and of being one of the most unequal societies in the world" (p. 25).

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In part, this aspiration stemmed from the commitment of the freedom movement to democracy; in part, it stemmed from—as Kothari argues—the major global changes that marked the world in 1947. Several momentous features described the world in the post-Second World War phase. The triumph of liberal democracy over fascism, the regeneration of western Europe through the Marshall plan, the growth of left-leaning parties in the West, the fulfillment of the Keynesian model in the form of the welfare state, the goal of full employment, the expansion of communism and in particular the emergence of China, large-scale decolonization, the setting up of the U.N. and other agencies committed to welfare and social well being, and above all the consolidation of democracy and development marked this period off from either the preceding or the succeeding period. All this required active intervention of the state in taking the country forward through a process of modernization, social uplift, and secularism.

A felicitous political conjuncture indeed. But what do we have to show for all this in the fifty years that India has been independent of colonial rule? We would do well to look at the answer one Sabitri Debi of Kotulpur in Bankura gave to a series of questions on the freedom struggle raised by Partha Chatterjee and his colleagues:

> When the country became free, it would bring good to its people. We were in servitude. They were ruling us, oppressing us. We would be free from that oppression. We would become independent. An independent country would be much better. May be people would get coarse [basic] food and clothing. And the traders—weavers and peasants would each do their own work and feed themselves. We would have some ease, some comfort. . . That is why when freedom came in the year 1947, we were so full of hope and expectation. We thought we would live in happiness, that our children would live in comfort. We did not want great comforts: so we didn't want to become landlords, we didn't want a lot of wealth or gold or silver. All we wanted was enough *coarse rice* and *coarse cloth* to live in comfort. But we never got those satisfactions of freedom. . . We freed ourselves from the hands of foreigners. *But now we can't free ourselves from our own brothers in our own country*" (p. 2–3, emphasis mine).

If we can assess political biographies of societies from personal biographies, this passage is a damming indictment of the Indian State. All that the people wanted was coarse cloth and coarse grains, but even this has not been granted to them. What price freedom? Good intentions? Commitments? Prabhat Patnaik writes that the main problem is that capitalist development was sought to be promoted without any significant land reforms. "The bourgeoisie of this century, coming late into the historical arena, has shown itself to be singularly incapable of launching a thorough-going attack on pre-capitalist property relation lest it rebound into an attack on bourgeois property relations" (p. 39–40). This lack led to three major consequences. Firstly, it provided a narrow base to capitalist development into the countryside. Secondly, it failed, on the one hand, to break the power of the landlords and to enlist the social support of the rural masses on the other. Thirdly, it provided a damper to the overall rate of growth of output and employment in the country.

Patnaik's essay comments on opportunities lost by the narrow vision of the leadership. Not only did the development strategy preclude an egalitarian distribution of assets including land; it provided an opportunity for the

All that the people wanted was coarse cloth and coarse grains, but even this has not been granted to them. What price freedom? Good intentions? Commitments? Prabhat Patnaik writes that the main problem is that capitalist development was sought to be promoted without any significant land reforms.

proto-bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, and the landlords, to use the state in order to augment their share in the output. This amounts to what Patnaik calls the primary accumulation of capital. The state apart from its other tasks became the medium for the large-scale transfers of capital to the capitalist and proto-capitalist groups at the same time as it was called upon to maintain growing expenditures to keep the domestic market expanding. The statist regime ended in the 1980s for a variety of internal and external reasons, truncating in the process India's economic autonomy radically. Whereas we cannot return to the *dirigisme* strategy today, we have to chart out imaginative measures to come to terms with the international economy, and yet retain internal autonomy. This will involve radical land distribution, free and compulsory primary education, the provision of basic health care, the provision of basic amenities in rural areas, decentralization of decision making and a step up in the investment ratio—"to ensure that the economy is spared the ravages of speculation whose scope has expanded so greatly under the current internationalization of capital" (p. 60).

But all this needs is the kind of political will which our past and current leadership has failed to provide. Why cannot a country that prides itself on its technological capacity to go nuclear provide either education or health to its people? This may be an obvious statement, but it is not by this fact rendered trivial. For at some point someone has to ask the question—why? We exploded a nuclear device at Pokhran at roughly the same time as our farmers were committing suicide because they could not bear the weight of debts!

Chatterjee in a historical exploration of the problem argues that the modernizing impulses of the leadership sat uneasily with the demands of democracy. From the very beginning of the independent career of the Indian nation-state, we find a contradiction between its modernizing aspirations and its commitment to democracy. The con-

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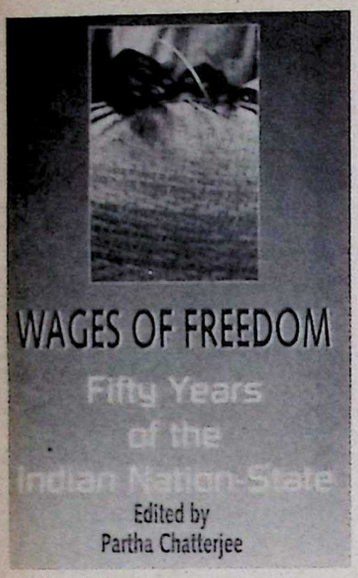


tradiction was to mature in the 1970s when under Indira Gandhi a centralized state structure was set up even as political society dispersed and was fragmented. These contradictions have sharpened to a point "where one can hear more clearly than was ever possible in Indian politics after Independence, the posing of a choice between the demands of modernity and the compulsions of democracy" (p. 17).

Since Chatterjee poses the problem in terms of a dichotomy, and in terms of a polarization, he cannot tell us how the civil and the political arenas have themselves undergone change, how the governing principles of these arenas have shifted from the task of arbitrating conflicting demands, to the task of arbitrating incommensurable demands. Kothari, however, touches upon this point and argues that the upsurge of the so-called lower castes and classes has mounted a challenge to existing structures and hegemonies. "The political process set into train by this new awakening will, of course, be subjected to a backlash from those who have enjoyed power and privilege for close to half a century. Also, the new bearers of power will not necessarily pursue the interests of the large masses in whose name they are likely to assume power. . . for the masses there is still a long road ahead" (p. 36). Of all the things that India has inherited and imbibed, democracy stands out as having the most cutting edge at any rate for the poor and the exploited. Democracy, I can further add, does not guarantee anything, neither equality nor rights nor justice. What it does is to institute the *possibilities* of a social transformation through institutions, ideologies, and practices. People have to appropriate these to widen the arena of politics. Democracy itself has never delivered anything to the people. Its institutions and practices can only provide a forum where people armed with rights can engage with each other and with society, sometimes in a non-conflictual manner, and sometimes in a conflictual manner.

The first section of the book ends with Achin Vanaik's incisive analysis of India's foreign policy. India's foreign policy perspectives, he argues, stand in disarray because of an objective factor—the end of the Cold War, and a more important subjective factor—the intellectual and political deficiencies of those who have influenced and conducted external relations. These people armed with their own narrow perspectives have failed to realize that a country's external policy is inextricably linked to its internal situation. A successful foreign policy can only be built on a democratic and egalitarian society, concludes Vanaik.

The second section of the book is organized around the theme of cultural practices in India. Tapati Guha Thakurta in an intricate and complex essay explores the manner in which 1947 was figured and institutionalized in art—in particular the staging of a large and spectacular exhibition of the masterpieces of Indian art at Government House in 1948 and the later setting up of a museum. Detailing the history and the genealogy of the various pieces that were exhibited, Thakurta argues that the display produced and perpetuated a visual canon as well as a sense of the national, presuming as it did the existence of a national community of citizen-viewers, "convinced of the sacral identity of art and fully attuned to the aesthetic and national connotations of the heritage displayed" (p. 122).

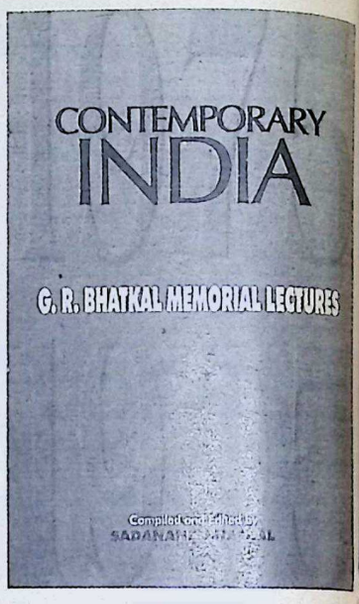
Madhava Prasad in a fascinating essay details the evolution of the film in India and its relationship with the state. From the beginning of cinema—the endeavours of Dadasaheb Phalke—the cinematic screen was regarded as the space in which the 'national' was constructed. The screen was to become an object of tussle, as indigenous filmmakers wrested it for their own imaginings. The state has at various times intervened for supportive, aesthetic and censoring reasons. Above all the film text produced the grounds of possibilities, as the state was defined and redefined through the narrative.

Sudipta Kaviraj examines the cultural portrayals of representative democracy, through an exploration of various forms—the way novel and films depicted the city for instance. "Democracy in the decades after independence was not merely a political principle; it also had a clearly marked space of residence. It was universally known to live in the city. The city had that mysterious quality, liberating and contaminating at the same time" (p. 149). Democracy brought in an enormous change in the language, culture, and schematics of the dislike people feel for their cultural superiors, and this has been made possible through the cultural structure of representativity—in songs for instance. Bombay films have intensified the culture of subordination but these forms have their limits—for films do not breed social egalitarianism but symbolic retribution through a great act of 'retributive humiliation'.

The third section on the 'long arm of hegemony' contains two pieces. Javed Alam acutely documents the search of the left for hegemony. Through a detailed exploration of struggles, official pronouncements of the communist parties, their positions on various issues, Alam concludes, that the communist parties have been obsessed with the status of the bourgeoisie. They, therefore, failed to address the question of the terrain that the Indian State has captured for itself; it has failed to see how the state has subsumed society. Aditya Nigam chronicles the debates and the shifts in the position of the CPM in some detail. The transformation of the CPM from a militant radical party to its reformist version is connected to the discourse of nationhood, he argues. Therefore, whereas in 1972, it could characterize India as a multinational state, today it is the only party that objects to the formation of an independent Uttarakhand.

In the last section titled 'From the Margins to the Centre', Nivedita Menon chronicles the shift in the debate on the uniform civil code, and the positions of various women's organizations on the issue, within a wider discussion of secularism. She suggests that secularism has been only about the modernizing impulses of the Indian elite and never about the relationship between the state and religions. Menon holds that we need to renegotiate the terms of the democratic project.

Kancha Ilaiah posits the Dalit Bahujan notion of the nation against the brahminical notion that to him is a fantasy. The Dalit bahujans on the other hand, want to build the nation based on a productive culture. The nation, he suggests, needs to be gradually dalitized. "Dalitization means universalizing the principles of labour as life and of democracy and equality as the aim of life with such an approach to work and life, we could build a real people's nation' (p. 291). M.S. Pandian details the new dalit writings from Tamil Nadu, which to him represent the master language of the nation.



Elaborating the Pondicherry Group's political agenda, he suggests that it has managed to elude the trap of the nation with admirable skill. Subir Bhaumik deals in some detail with the rather neglected region of the North East, and chronicles the travails of the region—militancy, narcotics, the ravages of the army, the alienation of the people. Fifty years after Partition, he writes, India's North East remains the stepchild of the Republic. If a breakthrough is not achieved, he warns, the region will degenerate into another Bosnia and Colombia rolled into one, "where ethnic hostility and free flow of narcotics dependence on gun-power by the state and the communities will distort the region's politics, society and economy beyond repair. The Indian state will then be forced into retreat, and its authority in the North East will solely depend on military power, not on moral authority growing out of consensus and a sense of shared destiny" (p. 327). All in all a devastating analysis.

The second volume under review is a collection of lectures delivered in the space of twenty years. V.K.R.V. Rao's paper (in 1979) identifies the changes in the Indian economy since the advent of planned economic development through an analysis of National Accounts Data. He concludes that the Indian economy continues to be dominated by the primary sector and unorganized enterprises. V.M. Dandekar (in 1977) in his analysis of class conflict in India argues that farmers, agricultural labour, artisans, handicraftsmen, small industry and businessmen all of whom he calls the price takers, are leaving their trades behind and seeking wage employment in the organized sector, that is the price makers. They have nothing to lose but their petty property, and they gain an assured income

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The inherent contradiction in everybody trying to be a price-maker, will then fall to the ground" (p. 69).

R.V. Nadkarni (in 1992) discusses the virtues of the private entrepreneur and that of cooperatives. Nani A. Talkhivala (in 1995) holds forth on education and the art of reading. For a nation, he states, there is nothing more satisfying than education in human values, and for an individual, nothing is more satisfying than general reading in human values. R.N. Haldipur (in 1987) on education in a changing world dwells on the various travails of education in India. He also happens to believe that when you teach a woman, you teach an entire family [!]. B. Kuppuswamy (in 1981) concentrating on education once again, argues that just as there is something unique in Indian cooking and eating habits [even in these days of fast foods?], just as there is something unique in the aesthetic taste of an Indian, his attitude towards rivers and mountains, there is something unique in the Indian's culture and personality, and education should bring this forth. A.B. Shah (in 1976) again on education is far less sanguine about the possibilities of the educational system as it is at present.

Achyut Patwardhan (in 1980) talks of disillusionment and clarity, suggests that the best way to establish clarity is to reconnect with nature, then only will man realize his true nature as a part of the eco-system and not as a ruler. U.R. Anantha Murthy (1983) in thoughts on contemporary culture raises vital questions of culture and of its authenticity, as well as its relationship to the West. Ashok Vajpeyi (in 1984) on literature in the 1980s suggests that with the decline in reading habits, literature has lost its relevance for the modern world. People would rather read glossies, for facing up to one's fate is no longer the concern of the contemporary man. Durga Bhagwat (in 1982) spins out the various implications of the freedom of thought. Reverend Griffiths (in 1984) on the new vision of reality, dwell on the implications that the philosophy of science holds for theology. Samuel Israel (in 1975) speaks on twenty-five years of Indian publishing.

Whereas the second book under review is disappointing—it cannot fail to be so, culled as it is from public lectures given at various points in history, *Wages of Freedom* is an interesting collection of—in some cases—brilliant articles, highlighting the various aspects and drawbacks of our fifty years of independence. Policy makers should make a point of reading it.

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The Contemporary Mode

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

THE PARADOXES OF PARTITION, VOL. I, 1937–39
Edited by S.A.I. Tirmizi
Centre for Federal Studies, Jamia Hamdard, Manak Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. lxii+1017, Rs. 2950.00

COUNTDOWN TO PARTITION: THE FINAL DAYS
By Ajit Bhattacharjea
Harper Collins, India, New Delhi, 1997, pp. xxvii+112, Rs. 195.00

The international changes in the perception of history is a curious thing. I read somewhere of a survey done by the Education Faculty of a north American University, with the object of finding out how the young people perceive contemporary history. And a bright young spark said that the contemporary period began with the Beatles and the assassination of President Kennedy. And when did it begin for his parents? "For them it never began". If there has been any effort in India to find out how contemporaneity is thought of, I do not know of it.

Among professional historians in India a measure of recognition of the existence of contemporary history was the creation of one chair in one University about three decades ago; that apart, participation of historians in the exploration of contemporary history has been miniscule. What are they waiting for? Probably the opening up of the arvhives relating to recent times. That will be a long wait because of a statutory limitation debarring transfer of government records to the archives until they are forty years old. Moreover, the beauty of the system is that only when the lapse of forty years is formally recognized and notified by the government, those years officially lapse. Then alone the transfer can be made and even then there will be restrictions on confidential and some other categories of documents. Historians who stand and wait may also serve, but, in the meanwhile, the journalists serve a lot better and produce works of contemporary history which are widely read.

There is, as of now, a great deal of interest in contemporary history, though its perception may differ between the older generation and the younger one. To the older generation it is often a nostalgia trip, to the younger it is filling up the yawning gap between what they are taught in the institutional education system and the here-and-now. A spate of publications and some I know of in the pipelines, indicate particular interest in the years preceding the Partition and Independence. S.A.I. Tirmizi and Ajit Bhattacharjea address that interest in different ways. Tirmizi writes as an archivist and Bhattacharjea as a journalist summing up the news of the day, supplemented by documents published later.

The collection of documents relating to the decade preceding the Partition is an ongoing scheme under the direction of Tirmizi. Many like myself would remember him as the Director of the National Archives. His current project has yielded the present volume after seven years and two more are expected to be published later. This volume consists of extracts from over five hundred documents from archives and depositories in India, England and Pakistan. Some of these documents have been published before in previous collections, e.g. the selections from Rajendra Prasad Papers, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, or collections published in Pakistan. Nevertheless, there is much that is new, i.e. unpublished till now, and of particular importance are documents from the Jinnah Papers and National Archives of Pakistan, rather inaccessible to most Indian historians.

Bhattacharjea is a contemporary observer of the historical events he describes in the last few weeks before Partition. He was, I gather, a reporter in *Hindustan Times* at that time. Unfortunately whatever might have been his own experience in those eventful days, he fails to utilize that. Instead he depends on old newspapers and the correspondence of political leaders published later (without citation of sources). Perhaps as a concession to the readership it was written for—this was serialized in a weekly—the author simplifies things a bit and allows some stereotypes and musty old phrases (Patel the "ironman of Congress", "the scholarly Maulana", Jinnah "a brilliant, vain and solitary figure" march in, in the first few pages, xxii–xxv).

Bhattacharjee's main point in a rather flat narrative of what happened each week between the middle of May and August, seems to be that Mahatma Gandhi was uncompromising in his rejection of the idea of Pakistan and that the Congress leaders refused to listen to him. This is not an unfamiliar story. However, the real story may be a little more complex. Consider, for example, Gandhi's advice to Sarat Chandra Bose, brother of Subhas Chandra, and a major provincial leader opposed to Partition. Gandhi wrote to him on 8 June 1947 that it was better to agree to "a frank partition, it being a recognition of the division of hearts." (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 88) Bhattacharjea does not notice this and similar other statements which suggest an inconsistency. It was an inconsistency born of the moral tension of a man forced to accept by the circumstances an idea which was morally repugnant to him. Gandhi's utterances, specially in the prayer meetings, are indeed touching: "All around me is utter darkness".

Tirmizi's collection of documents is valuable not only because it draws from archives in Pakistan which few Indians have used, but also because there is in evidence an effort to make the collection representative of diverse points of view and political parties. Its main shortcoming is that the focus is entirely on the political leaders and the decision-makers in government, excluding movements from below i.e. the numerous popular movements which formed the mosaic of politics, particularly with the formation of provincial governments from 1937. Basically the collection of focuses an 'Central politics', and thus the ghost of Nicolas Mansergh rides again towards the event supposed to be the central thing, the Transfer of Power. Nevertheless, this collection is a valuable addition to our knowledge of some aspects of the politics of 1937–39 and in particular the politics of communalism.

Tirmizi has, as he says, "drawn relatively few conclusions leaving the documents to speak for themselves" (p. viii), Bhattacharjea offers a résumé of news. If the historians' job is to go beyond te conjucture into the trends of long duration connecting the past with our here-and-now, their agenda is self-evident. That agenda needs to be addressed now.

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An Enduring Commemoration Volume

Narayani Gupta

MODERN SOUTH ASIA: HISTORY, CULTURE, POLITICAL ECONOMY

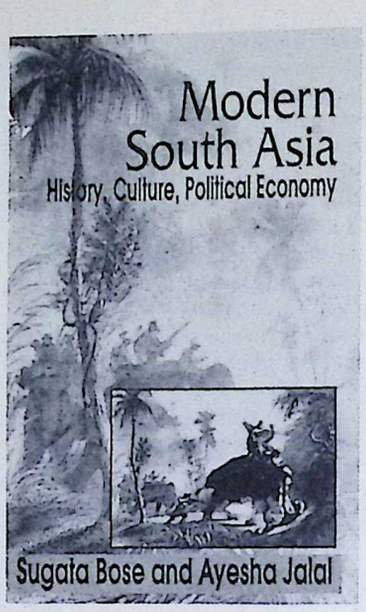
By Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. x+302, glossary, bibliography, index, maps and photographs, Rs. 425.00

In the U.S.A., most academics, at some time or other, write a textbook. In India we launch 'series/s' which always remain incomplete. Therefore good short histories of India are always welcome—for teachers, students and lay readers. Perhaps the best-known is the two-volume Penguin history by Romila Thapar and Percival Spear. Spear wrote yet another general history for the Michigan series. Stanley Wolpert's book has gone into many editions, and is familiar to all American students of India. Judith Brown's book on modern India (1985) carried the history up to the 1980s while Sumit Sarkar (1982) began the story in 1885, when the Indian G.D.P. was established, and stopped at 1947 (all teachers and students in India subscribe to the orthodoxy that as my son, then in school, explained to me, in 1947 'history' ends and 'civics' begins). The present book has been written by two highly talented and productive young historians, one from Pakistan and one from India, both now teaching in the U.S.A. This partnership in itself makes the book significant because this is a work on South Asia, not just on India. The authors begin by dedicating the book to the next generation, and end with the hope of "a better South Asia based on mutual understanding and cooperation at the dawn of the next century". In a post-Pokhran-2 world, this spirit is a welcome ray of hope.

The authors step skilfully over the rocks and thorny bushes as well as the tempting green meadows of various historiographical fashions—post-colonial, post-structural, post-modern, post-orientalist. . .) which in the last twenty years have often impaled bewildered students on the dilemma of whether or not to comment on the Emperor's 'new' clothes.

This deserves to go down as one of the most enduring of the commemorations of the 50th Anniversary. It is brief—250 pages as against Judith Brown's 400. There are two chapters on earlier history, and half the book (as with Brown) is devoted to the period after the First World War. This section is without doubt the most confidently written. For readability it comes a close second to Spear which, written in the pageant-of-Viceroys mould of the 1950s, has become a period-piece. Lucid and elegant, uncluttered with jargon, it is enlivened with quotations from poets ranging from Akbar Allahabadi to W.H. Auden, and occasional delightful turns of phrase like the description of the British Indian army as "a domestic rod of order and an international fire brigade". There is a conscious attempt to notice women—there is a photograph of the magnificent tomb of Bibi Jiwandi (who was she?); the grand ladies at the Mughal Court, who hailed from Central Asia and Iran as well as India; the nameless victims of the savagery of 1947. . . The authors step skilfully over the rocks and thorny bushes as well as the tempting green meadows of various historiographical fashions—post-colonial, post-structural, post-modern, post-orientalist. . .) which in the last twenty years have often impaled bewildered students on the dilemma of whether or not to comment on the Emperor's 'new' clothes. In a brief survey (pp. 8–11) Ranajit Guha and the subalternists and Edward Said have been discussed; they are also frequently cited as are Partha Chatterjee, Chris Bayly and Muzaffar Alam. What is a great pity, however, is that few other scholars have been. Dozens of times it is stated that 'recent research' or 'modern historians' have modified earlier assumptions. But in the absence of citations, serious scholars will not be able to follow up the issues. While a good textbook is the distilled essence of many monographs, the best textbook is one which lists not an arbitrary fifteen-or-so books per chapter but in the course of the narrative opens doors to many other rooms where the reader can wander. Again, there are tantalizing half-statements. We would love to know, for instance, which two nationalist leaders Tagore called 'modernist' (p. 12).



As with practically every book on 'Indian' history, the 'south' gets marginalized (I do not know who coined the cliché 'the Hindi heartland' (p. 224) but it is time we gave it up). The uninformed may not realize that Mapillas (p. 86) are Muslim; the 'Coromandal Coast' on p. 33 ought to read 'the Malabar coast'; the 'Carnatic courts' on p. 55 refer to Tanjavur, Madurai and Thiruvanandapuram, none of which is in present-day Karnataka; the 'varna-defined caste system' (p. 74) does not make it clear that in the caste terminology of the south there were *two* main categories—brahmins and sudras; the terms 'Kshatriya' and 'Vaisya' were not in common use (which is why the Kerala Nairs who would see themselves as warriors and scribes, were termed 'sudras'). The 'South' is far from undifferentiated as we 'Madrasis' (Chennis?)—the Islam of Kerala and Tirunelveli described by Susan Bayly (referred to on p. 33) is different from that of Bijapur and later Hyderabad, which had direct links with Iran. It is useful to recall that the earliest literary Urdu was the Dakhani of Golconda. Moving north, the print of the Qutb Minar on p. 22 shows it not as it was when 'completed by Iltutmish' but with the two marblefaced stories added by Ferozeshah as well as the Chhatri of Colonel Robert Smith. The Hardinge bomb attack (p. 122) occurred in Chandni Chowk, not in New Delhi, which did not exist then.

While a good textbook is the distilled essence of many monographs, the best textbook is one which lists not an arbitrary fifteen-or-so books per chapter but in the course of the narrative opens doors to many other rooms where the reader can wander.

Political and economic history, for most part, have been analysed in a serious and engaged manner. But there are major omissions. There is, amazingly, no reference to Communist governments in Kerala and West Bengal, to EMS or to Jyoti Basu's record innings. The Chipko movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the success story of the Grameen Bank, are at least as important as details of L.K. Advani's fancy-dress *yatras*. Is it possible that the occasional exhilaration and sense of achievement we feel in India does not get across to non-resident scholars, who are quicker to notice puffs of black smoke than the straws in the wind? Also, sadly, as with most writings on India, there is little on 'culture' (though it figures in the title). Admittedly our three countries between them have an awesome tally of 'problems', of injustice, of strife. But they also embody creativity, beauty, celebration, humour. The changes in the arts practised and patronized, in townscapes, reactions to monumental architecture, changes in lifestyles and in domestic interiors, could have found a place, however, briefly. Of course the authors are justified in arguing that "a single volume can only offer a glimpse of its richness and nuance", but with a good angle of vision it could be a penetrating and insightful glimpse (p. 3). We see the players, but not the costumes, the ambience. We read their speeches, but miss the humour and the banter. Indian history could do with an Eric Hobsbawm, if not a Richard Cobb.

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Lores of Freedom

T.C.A. Srinivasa-Raghavan

THE PROUDEST DAY: INDIA'S LONG MARCH TO INDEPENDENCE

By Anthony Read and David Fisher

Jonathan Cape, 1997, pp. 565, Rs. 595.00

INDIA'S PARTITION

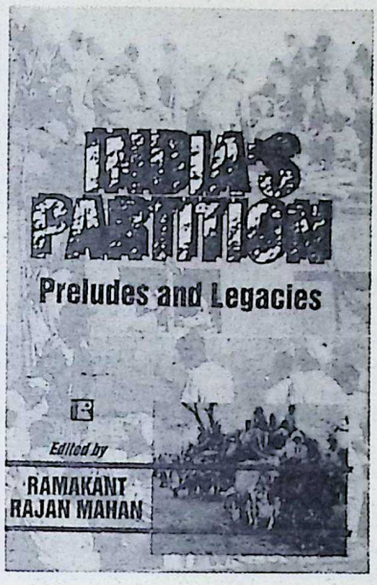
Edited by Ramakant and Rajan Mahan

Rawat Publications, 1998, pp. 377, Rs. 600.00

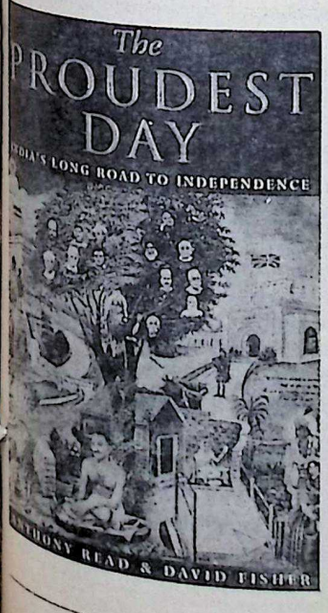
JINNAH

By Ajeet Jawed

Kitab Publishing House, 1998, pp. 318, Rs. 400.00



Around 2,000 books and perhaps twice that number of academic articles have been written about the freedom movement and India's Partition in 1947. Approximately a quarter of these have been written after the secret papers of the British government began to be available to researchers in the late 1960s. So veteran readers of the lore should stand warned. These books contain nothing that is even remotely new. Neither facts nor insights. Indeed, had it not been for the 50th anniversary of India's independence—and Pakistan's too—it is unlikely that the first two books would have ever been produced.



The first book is, in fact, very much the product of the trend generated by market forces which treats all major anniversaries as an occasion to sell souvenirs. Books are simply just another class of souvenirs. It covers the period from about 1900 to 1947 and tells the story of, well, India's long march to independence. Only the facts are stated; the motives are left out almost entirely.

The second book is the result of the usual tokenism, namely, a seminar to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Independence. The third book, which is about Jinnah, appears to be a labour of love. But sadly, the ardour is not matched by academic excellence. On the whole, therefore, all three books are a disappointment. Nevertheless, Messrs. Read and Fisher have at least written a very readable book, especially for newcomers to the lore. They must be congratulated for their diligence and patience in writing about events in a faraway land, in a faraway time and about people who are now even further away—beyond the pale, in fact. Besides, the passage of time and repeated portrayals, have made them into cardboard characters.

In spite of the diligence, the result isn't quite in the class of *Freedom at Midnight*, at least as far as the thriller genre goes. But, in some sense, it could be argued that this is its main strength. After all, it is pretty irritating to read phrases like "Gandhi mumbled" or "Jinnah trembled" or "Nehru dissembled". That sort of Woodward and Bernstein style can end up making a dog's breakfast of even popular history.

The important thing is that Read and Fisher have got their facts right and the narration is brisk and peppered with quotes. So novice readers of the history of that period will not find it a waste of time, or even money, should they happen to purchase it. It gives a broad and accurate view of the politics that went on. For the experts, however, it is at best a browse, that too not a compulsory one.

There's also that other pitfall of popular history: the need for maintaining a supposed balance between the main *dramatis personae*. It is never very clear in such books who the heroes and the villains were. There are no good guys and bad guys and that makes such volumes confusing. If you are not going to take sides, why bother to tell the story?

Since this is often a problem, British journalists have found a typically sly answer: they tend to blame mainly Britain for the division of India. This is true, of course, but it suffers from one fatal defect: it lets off the Indian politicians too lightly. True, that way the product is acceptable on both sides of Wagah. But it is altogether too contrived. During the last one year, I have read nine books on the Partition and the events that went before it, written by British authors and published in Britain. Five of these were of the popular genre. Each of them suffered from the same basic flaw—an exaggerated devotion to journalistic balance regardless of the facts.

This is not to say that such balance is undesirable. But when it ends up offering no judgements at the end of a long read, preferring to leave it to subtle suggestion, the technique becomes suspect. The logic of following it, come what may, seems to be that India may be the bigger market but Pakistan, too, offers some sales. No point in offending anyone. Read and Fisher's offering is no exception to what seems to have become an unstated rule firmly laid down by British publishers.

So the result is a bit like Pathak's Biryani Paste. It fails to ignite those famously lascivious subcontinental passions which curries are meant to ignite. Instead, it is more like what the British disgustingly call the Toad-in-the-Hole—a bland pastry with a sausage stuck in the middle.

Happily, the second book offers a much richer fare. It has resulted from a seminar held in Jaipur under the auspices of the South Asia Centre of the University of Jaipur. As such, it consists of a collection of papers which were presented at the seminar. Several scholars attended the seminar and their views are worth a quick run-through. It is interesting that, while the current generation of the British are busy blaming Britain for the Partition, several Indians are busy blaming the Congress—specifically Nehru and Patel—for it. Several of the contributors to this volume make this point, namely, that had it not been for the Congress, the Cabinet Mission Plan would have been accepted and it might have prevented Partition.

This view suffers from an excessive dose of liberalitis. Of course, if the Cabinet Mission Plan had been accepted by the Congress—the League and Jinnah had accepted it—Partition might have been avoided. But it must also be remembered that it would have amounted to renouncing everything that the Congress had stood for. The issue, after all, was whether the Congress spoke for all Indians or only the Hindus. The Cabinet Mission Plan implicitly assumed the latter view and this was clearly unacceptable.

But this fashion apart—every discipline must have its own fads and history is no exception—there are some very thought-provoking essays in the collection. Two are especially good. One for its unusual treatment of Paul Scott, the man who wrote the Raj Quartet and the other for its unequivocal view that it was Jinnah, and Jinnah alone, who was responsible for the Partition. The essay on Paul Scott is by Robin Moore who has specialized on the freedom movement and the Partition that it led to in 1947. Moore has taken an unusual approach to interpreting Scott and the result is not only highly readable but also provocative.

On balance, however, it might have been useful if the organizers of the seminar had asked the participants for more narrowly focussed papers. Their failure to do so has resulted in the broadbrush approach which was alright in 1970 (as seen in the volume edited by C.H. Phillips and M.D. Wainright) but almost three decades on is merely tiresome. A lot of research has become available since then and the seminar should have raised very specific questions not just relating to the period up to 1947 but also to the three years immediately following. By all accounts, those years are equally, if not more, fascinating. But somehow history, at least for historians, seems to stop at midnight on August 14–15, 1947.

The third volume under review here is by a woman who has devoted a lot of effort in proving that Jinnah wasn't such an ogre. In fact, she says, he was a rather decent sort and had it not been for the strange antics of Gandhiji and the Congress, he would have turned out just fine.

Maybe so. Maybe Jinnah was hard done by at the hands of the Hindu

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Secular and Nationalist

Jinnah

Dr. Ajeet Jawed

Mahasabha and the Congress, not to mention Gandhiji whose accession to Congress leadership after the Nagpur Congress in 1920 greatly discomfited Jinnah (who was literally shouted down and retired from the stage with tears in his eyes). Maybe it can also be conceded that Jinnah was a far greater rationalist and secularist than Gandhiji was. But the fact remains: had it not been for his insistence that he alone spoke for the Muslims of India, the British would not have got their opportunity to divide India.

For hard as Jawed might try, the truth is that the Great Game had begun as far back as the 1890s when Principal Archbold of the Aligarh Muslim University and Harcourt Butler had conspired to put the wind up the Muslim feudal lords of Punjab and Bengal about Hindu domination. Jinnah was only a cog in that game and, as Ayesha Jalal (a Pakistani historian) has so brilliantly shown, he ended up representing the feudal lords of Punjab and Bengal because they thought he was the only one suited to deal with the British on their behalf. He spoke the language of the firangi while they didn't.

The process was nowhere as simple as Jawed believes it to be. To be sure Jinnah was a decent man, a constitutionalist, a liberal, secular and everything that is required in a good and moral politician. But he was also a puppet in the hands of three marionettes—the British, the Unionist Party of Punjab and the Krishak Party of Bengal.

What a pity that Ajeet Jawed fails to recognize this. Had she done so, we might have had a far better biography.

T.C.A. Srinivasa-Raghavan is with the Business Standard.

Coming to Terms With History

Gillian Wright

THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE: VOICES FROM THE PARTITION OF INDIA
By Urvashi Butalia
Viking, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 278, Rs. 295.00

At the gate of Humayun's tomb a member of staff of the Archaeological Survey was scanning his newspaper.

"Much cooler today," I remarked.

"Yes, it rained in Shimla," he replied, "Hot winds blow in Rajasthan, and Delhi gets hot. It rains in Shimla, and it gets cooler. Delhi doesn't have any weather of its own, just like it doesn't have any people of its own. You won't find anyone who really belongs to this city, except on Daryaganj side—and they're Muslims."

A lot of people in Delhi don't belong, as he understood it, because they are refugees, and the children of refugees, who came here from East Punjab at Partition.

One of them is Urvashi Butalia. She wrote this book because her family had been uprooted and divided. This book is really her voice, her story, her attempt to comprehend Partition.

"For my mother Subhadra
and my father Joginder
Who taught me about Partition
For Ranamama, my uncle
Who lives in Partition from day to day
And for my grandmother Dayawanti/
Ayesha
Whose life Partition shaped
As it did her death."

Few dedications arouse such curiosity. What happened to Dayawanti/Ayesha? If you've read the recent Indian volume of *Granta*, you'll know the story, told again here. Urvashi's own Partition experience is in fact the only one in *The Other Side of Silence* which is truly first hand. It is also the single most compelling piece of writing in the book.

The main figure in the division of the Butalia family was Ranamama, who decided to stay in Lahore at Independence although his brothers and sisters came to India. They wanted to take their mother with them, but Ranamama didn't let her leave. The property was in her name. To live more easily in his new country he converted to Islam, and made his mother do the same. The family in India never knew. Then finally Urvashi went to Lahore. There was reunion, and then gradually separation.

"For a long time afterwards," she writes, "I found it difficult to talk about that parenthetical time in my life."

Urvashi's uncle had never spoken about how Partition affected him until he talked to her.

"My child," he said, "this is the first time I am speaking to my own blood... You, you understand what it is I'm talking about. That is why you are here on this search. You know. Even if nothing else ever happens, I know that you have been sent here to lighten my load."

These are two individual silences. Millions of other people have their own.

The Other Side of Silence is the title Urvashi chooses for her book. There are the silences of those that died, whose stories can never be told. There are the silences of women, particularly women abducted during Partition, of children and of Dalits. None of their voices are represented in the conventional history books of Independence, and these are the voices Urvashi is anxious that we should hear.

Her aim is to present an alternative picture of Partition to be read alongside conventional histories to help to reinterpret them. As she writes, "Perhaps more than any other event in modern Indian history Partition lives on in family histories particularly in north India, where tales of horror and brutality, the friendship and sharing, are told and retold between communities, families and friends... This collection of memories... are the ways in which we can know this event. In many senses, they *are* the history of the event."

Remembering she believes is important in order to come to terms with history, to be able to forget.

This book could have been just a collection of interviews. Urvashi interviewed some seventy witnesses to Partition at random over a decade. All of them were from Punjab, and all of them from India because it wasn't possible for her to do similar research in Pakistan. She does though include Pakistani voices from other sources where she can. She says that she pursued her task "obsessively" and that she could think of little else for these years. This is one point where there seems to be a little exaggeration. Seventy interviews over ten years is after all only seven a year, and for her chapter on Dalits she only found one interviewee.

In fact she reproduces at length only a few of these seventy interviews and they are, she writes, "the stories that

meant the most to me, stories of people with whom I have formed real friendships, or stories to which I keep returning again and again." Readers of this book too return to these stories again and again, as they are mentioned in one chapter, quoted in parts in another as well as being reproduced almost in total. Several stories, including her own family's, are told from the perspective of more than one of the persons. This is at least the antithesis of the soundbyte, and there is no mistaking the context from which quotations are taken. Repetition etches each story into memory. It is as well the technique of the oral story-teller. But it does encourage the reader to skip. This is also the case because many of the author's passionately considered arguments are repeated too. There is hardly an idea which makes its appearance only once.

Urvashi seems too attached to her interview "material". As she points out there is a big difference between the spoken and written word, and many nuances are lost when speech becomes text. This is even more true when the text is translated from another language. There are many places where this text is confusing, and requires more editing.

It's therefore perhaps best that this book doesn't consist only of interviews. Most of it is made up of what Urvashi terms "analytical chapters" where she tries to discover the different truths of Partition. As she writes, "there were their stories, as they told them, and there was what I learnt and understood from these stories." In these chapters she interweaves her thoughts with Partition survivors' memories, newspaper reports, written memoirs and government records. The dominant voice throughout is her own, the voice of a very sincere, caring and intelligent individual, committed to feminism and to peace.

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"If this account is read as history, it may well be thrown out the door," Urvashi admits, and she has a point. Her facts and figures are sometimes badly sourced—the often quoted figure of 75,000 women abducted at Partition seems to come from just one social worker. Her feminist baggage occasionally weighs heavy, for example in the statement, although qualified, that for the majority of Indian women, marriage is like an abduction anyway, a violation, an assault, usually by an unknown man." Over-simplification can be misleading. Stating that Dalits had been given separate electorates in 1919 and the Poona Pact in 1932 "partially reversed this" is inaccurate.

But despite these weaknesses, all her hard work, all her passion and compassion, have succeeded in producing a book which is deeply disturbing, which does clearly depict the tragedies of individual victims of Partition. It should help in understanding, and perhaps in forgetting.

Describing the run-up to August 1947, she quotes from an angry letter written to the AICC in May that year by G. Kripalani. "Can you please let us know," he wrote, "what areas have been allotted to migrants? What provisions have been made so far to get them settled honourably? Where should they migrate? In what numbers and in what manner?" There were of course no answers. And not one of the ten expert committees set up to deal with various aspects of Partition under the Indian Independence Act dealt with the problems of refugees, although plans were drawn up to duplicate thousands of files for Pakistan.

It was sometimes difficult even for the men of the armed forces to decide which side they belonged. Urvashi tells the story of Abdul Shudul who came from India and opted for India, then finding his family had left for Pakistan he went there. There he was entangled in military bureaucracy and among strangers who didn't mix with refugees, and so he returned home. For him, and perhaps for many ordinary people, "nation and country seemed to have meant little ... The important thing was to be where there was work, and family."

Many other ordinary people joined the qafilas which walked across the border. One of the first long interviews in this book is with Rajinder Singh who describes the fear and grief of his walk into India. "When we got to Dera Baba Nanak they said to us, you have come home. But we thought, our home was over there. We have left it behind. How can this be home?"

Urvashi's task in representing the voices of children was perhaps the hardest. Many children were killed, and some were killers. Many disappeared. They were sold into prostitution and exploited as beggars. Some children were put up for adoption, but the adoptive parents were not well screened and girls were taken for cheap domestic labour. Some children, like Kulwant Singh were left with permanent psychological problems. His deepest memory is of lying by the body of his father, surrounded by fire.

The author's lone Dalit witness, Maya, defines herself firstly as a Dalit and only then as a woman—which must have been a shock for a committed feminist. Maya and her friends looted houses during the riots, which for them were between caste Hindus and Muslims, and therefore nothing to do with their community. This experience of being outsiders to violence was not unique. After the Rawalpindi riots in March 1947, the General Secretary of the All India Scheduled Caste Federation found that the only time Dalits were affected by the riots was when they were mistaken for caste Hindus. Urvashi also looks at the discrimination against Dalits in refugee camps, and how Dalits were discouraged from migrating as their traditional services were needed in Pakistan.

The best researched and strongest section of the book though deals with women's experiences, and concentrates on abducted women and those who were killed by their own families. And yet there is not a single interview with an abducted woman. This is a conscious decision, a silence imposed by Urvashi herself, to respect the privacy of these women. "Not only had they very effectively been rendered invisible, but many of them wanted to stay that way, their stories held closely to them. It was as if the memory of the rape, the experience of abduction, was in some way shameful and had therefore to be relegated to the realm of amnesia."

Urvashi does quote though from social workers who worked with abducted women, and from the Constituent Assembly where their fate was debated, and where the attitude of the speakers is most revealing. She also reproduces a page of a government list of 21,809 names of Hindu and Sikh women and children who had been abducted or reported missing at Partition. It was compiled to help in their search and recovery. The list has one column headed "Particulars of abductors" which shows that many women were abducted not by strangers but by men of the same village. Large numbers of women in their fifties and sixties had been taken, according to social workers, because after the deaths of the male members of their families they owned property. Their abductors then became their adopted "sons" for the sake of that property.

In September 1947 Pakistan and India agreed on a mechanism for the recovery of abducted women. They decided that the proper home for Hindu and Sikh women was India, and for Muslim women Pakistan. The women themselves could not choose their nation, neither did they have any choice in being recovered. Once they were located, they were forcibly evacuated. The search went on for nine years after Partition, some 22,000 Muslim women were recovered from India, and 8,000 Hindu and Sikh women from Pakistan.

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One woman social worker describes disguising herself as an egg seller and going from village to village in search of information. Dr Sushila Nayyar, Mahatma Gandhi's doctor, on one occasion failed to locate a woman who was hidden, bound and gagged. Luckily the woman later escaped and was able to find her husband.

Not all women even wanted to be returned, mainly because they had children by their new husbands. When they were brought back, many families didn't want them as they were "soiled". Some women lived out their lives in what were meant to be temporary ashrams. Other families would take the women back but without their children. Many women were pregnant when they returned. At a time when abortion was illegal, social workers confirmed that mass abortions were encouraged. Women who did give birth to the children of their abductors, wept as they bade farewell to their infants who were put in baskets and flown from Delhi to a special orphanage in Allahabad. They were promised that they could be in touch with their children, a promise which the authorities didn't keep.

Urvashi discusses how these women were seen as the national honour, rather than individuals. She discovered that male refugees remembered their women who were killed but found it difficult to mention those who were abducted.

Some women were killed by members of their own families. Urvashi found that these women and children were regarded as martyrs. Her witnesses to such killings include Mangal Singh who, with his brothers, killed seventeen women and children of his family, to Vasant Kaur, who with ninety other women and children tried to commit suicide by jumping into a well, and to her son Bir Bahadur Singh.

In Vasant Kaur's interview the difference between a female and male perception of an event becomes apparent. In her telling the deaths are devoid of heroism, in her son's they are replete with it. Several women and children of Vasant Kaur's family offered themselves to be killed by their own menfolk to prevent them falling into the hands of the Muslims, to preserve the community's honour. Vasant Kaur describes how she and the other women then jumped into a well but how she could not die. "It's like when you put rotis into a tandoor and if it is too full, the ones near the top, they don't cook, they have to be taken out. So the well filled up, and we could not drown."

Urvashi questions the motives for these deaths within families. Were the women, she asks, "acting upon a perceived (or rather misperceived) notion of the good of their community?" She thinks that the "lines between choice and coercion must have been more blurred than these accounts reflect." Perhaps what she underestimates is fear, both among men and women. Riots are more dangerous than wars because there are no rules at all. As Bir Bahadur Singh told her, "They kept on setting fire to the houses, and fire is such a scary thing, and the moment a person sees smoke, he gets frightened." Perhaps there seemed no choice at all. "A father who kills his daughter," said Bir Bahadur Singh, "how much of a victim, how helpless he must be."

Trust was also a victim of Partition. Bir Bahadur Singh told of how some Muslim friends had come and offered to shelter his family, but they had mistakenly refused. Urvashi more than once refers to refugees "harking back to an—often mythical—past where Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs lived together in relative peace and harmony." This is a strange statement because she has no evidence of the mythical nature of this relative peace.

In fact at the close of her book she cites a story with a very different message. Chaudhry Latif had occupied the house of the migrant Harikishan Das Bedi in Lahore. Bedi had left all his writings there, and wrote to "The Occupant" for them. Latif sent them gradually back to him in bundles over the years, and carefully kept all Bedi's letters to him until his death.

Bedi wrote to him, "I read your letter over and over again and felt that it had been written by a true friend. I also read it out to many of my friends. All agree that had all Hindus and Muslims shared the feelings which you have expressed. . . the bloodbath would never have taken place and we, living in India and Pakistan, would have taken our countries to great heights. But God had other plans. I shudder to think of what Hindus and Muslims have done to their fellow countrymen. . . And the worst part is that it was all perpetrated in the name of religion. No religion allows such bloodletting."

Urvashi wants to explore such friendships when and if she writes another book on Partition. I am sure such a book could be, like this, a valuable effort in understanding Partition. But then she will have to admit that for such friendships there must have been a past—often not mythical—where people did live together in relative peace.

Gillian Wright is an Urdu scholar and has translated two novels, Raag Darbari *and* Adha Gaon.

Calcutta's Colonial Taj Mahal

Subhadra Sen Gupta

THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL CALCUTTA: CONCEPTION, COLLECTIONS, CONSERVATION

Edited by Philippa Vaughan

Marg Publications, Bombay, 1997, pp. 160, Rs. 1850.00

As a non-resident Bengali, whenever I went to Calcutta as a child, the family would offer the Great Calcutta Tour. It included the National Museum, Outram Ghat, the zoo and the star of the show—old "Bhiktoria". The Victorial Memorial was Calcutta's colonial Taj Mahal but I was never very impressed by what the city had to offer. After all, as a hard core Dilliwalla I had older and much more interesting monuments literally in my backyard. Right in the next lane from our home in Daryaganj there was the Ghata Masjid, beyond it the soaring minarets of the Jama Masjid, Chandni Chowk and all of Red Fort. And that was just a fraction of what I could show them on their visits to Delhi. So I'll admit, till I grew up and got interested in Lord Curzon and discovered the magic of the paintings of the Daniells, I did not take the Victoria Memorial very seriously.

Actually, for years no one took the Victoria Memorial seriously, especially not the Government. It was not in the news except during sporadic attacks of bewildering national pride among our politicians. Like when they replaced the statue of Curzon with an oddly hunched, out of proportion figure of Shri Aurobindo, looking highly uncomfortable in the imperial surroundings. But then when have politicians had any sense of history anyway? So the incomparable collection of paintings inside mouldered away, bats and pigeons made their homes in the halls and rain water seeped in to damage the walls.

Fortunately some people had not forgotten the old lady. In 1989 as a reaction to the concern felt about the survival of the Victoria Memorial by the Chairman, trustees and the then curator, Dr. Hiren Chakraborti—a group led by Alan Tritton and his friends formed the Calcutta Tercentenary Trust. Conservation work was begun after raising money in India and overseas. Experts in the various fields of restoration of canvas, paper, even picture frames were generously provided by various museums and galleries in England. The work for this Indo-British project was not just of restoring the paintings but also of training people in India so that restoration and maintenance could continue later. The first project has restored eighty-two paintings that are ready for display.

This excellent Marg publication not only describes the work of the Trust but also chronicles the history of the Victoria Memorial. There are articles on the art collection, a profile of Lord Curzon and fascinating details of the actual restoration work. The heavy duty panel of writers include art historians like Philippa Vaughan, G.H.R. Tillotson and Derek Linstrum as also scholars like Narayani Gupta and Tapati Guha-Thakurta and experts in the various fields of conservation like Rupert Featherstone and Victoria Marsland-Boyer.

This book, like all Marg publications, is designed with sensitivity and produced with meticulous care, with high quality reproduction of photographs and paintings. It is always such a pleasure to open a Marg book, in its large generous format, elegantly designed pages and meticulous scholarship in the writing. If interest in India's heritage has been kept alive for lay readers like me, it has much to do with the joy these books and the Marg magazine has given us over the years.

Philippa Vaughan begins the book with a plea for the restoration and care of the art collection at the Victorial Memorial which according to her is the "finest group of oil paintings in the world by European artists active in India between 1780 and 1830. It is larger and more important than those of the Tate Gallery, London and the Mellon Collection of Art at Yale University, USA." These are some of the best works of these artists like the oil paintings by the Daniells—Thomas and William, Johann Zoffany, William Hodges, Thomas Hickey and Baltazard Solvyns. There is also an impressive collection of

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After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, Lord Curzon conceived of a memorial in the memory of the Empress of India, paid for by her loyal Indian subjects of course. Then in his usual autocratic style he declared it was to be not just a memorial to a queen but also symbol of the "continued beneficence of British rule". Right from the start, the Victoria Memorial was his personal project and he disdainfully ignored even the mildest of opposition that he encountered on the way.

art on paper like the drawings, water colours and aquatints by Samuel Davis. Lord Curzon did much to save our heritage from pillage and neglect, may be it is time we paid him back by restoring his imperial dream to its old majesty.

After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, Lord Curzon conceived of a memorial in the memory of the Empress of India, paid for by her loyal Indian subjects of course. Then in his usual autocratic style he declared it was to be not just a memorial to a queen but also symbol of the "continued beneficence of British rule". Right from the start, the Victoria Memorial was his personal project and he disdainfully ignored even the mildest of opposition that he encountered on the way. As Tillotson notes with amusement, "he doused such critics in a torrent of patrician eloquence". Though when he left India in 1905, the work was still going on, he had the satisfaction of leaving his mark on the Indian landscape like the Mughals that he had so admired.

Curzon visualized the Victoria Memorial as a sort of museum cum art gallery not just for exhibits on the glories of the Raj but also of the pre-colonial era. As Narayani Gupta puts it, Curzon planned a "part portrait gallery, part gallery of art, and part simply durbar". It was to be a sort of moving history lesson, a visual bioscope of the Indian landscape and the greats through portraits. That is, portraits of people whom Curzon believed to be the greats. So in this Indian valhalla Tipu Sultan and Nawab Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh were admitted but Nana Saheb and other leaders of the 1857 uprising were left waiting at the door.

The emphasis of course was to be primarily British, or in the soaring oratory of the Viceroy himself, "a standing record of our wonderful history, a visible monument of Indian glories, and an illustration more eloquent than any spoken address or printed page, of the lessons of public patriotism and civic duty". His words have an echo of the announcement of a thousand year Raj and the man would have been sorely disappointed if he had known how soon his imperial dream would vanish. Of course, compared to the other marble memorial that Curzon had so admired, this building could only be a visual symbol of the power and majesty of his solemn sovereign. At the Taj Mahal at least the lady in question is actually buried there in the company of her husband.

The whole theatre of royal structures appealed to a dramatic man like Curzon, whose admirable efforts to conserve Indian monuments are still remembered by tourist guides in Agra. He had fallen in love with the Taj Mahal when he saw it first in 1887, he could think of no monument in the world that was superior. Later his greatest efforts were dedicated to the Taj, where careful repairs were carried out, the gardens landscaped and his search for an appropriate lamp for the crypt finally ended in Cairo. So it was but natural that his memorial would be inspired by the Taj and visualized as a marble monument gleaming at the end of green lawns and silver pools of water.

Curzon's taste in buildings was classical, one reason he related so strongly to Mughal creations and not to the more exuberantly decorated Hindu temples of the south. In his mind the memorial was to be more Italian Renaissance than India. And of course he was not at a loss of words to state his opinion: "In Calcutta, a city of European origin and construction—where all the main buildings had been erected in a quasi-classical or Palladian style, and which possessed no indigenous architectural type of its own—it was impossible to erect a building in any native style. A Moghul building would have been ridiculous in the commercial and official capital of India, and quite unsuited for the memorial of a British Sovereign". So the job for an English architect was to transpose a classical European building with Mughal grandeur onto Calcutta's tropical landscape.

The final choice of the architect was a bit of a surprise. William Emerson was enthusiastic about incorporating Indian elements into his buildings and had built the flamboyant Muir College in Allahabad with its Islamic dome and arches. But at Curzon's orders he "obediently produced a design which is predominantly classical... The Indian details are still present , though now somewhat furtive." Vincent Esch as superintending architect was the man on the spot who saw it to its completion in 1921. But the memorial's glory was somewhat dimmed by the events that followed Curzon's departure. By then Calcutta was no longer the capital and Lutyens and Baker were grabbing the headlines with their design for New Delhi.

The three articles on the actual restoration work being done on canvas, paper and frames open a window to the world where meticulous craftsmanship comes touched by a true love for art. These paintings had been badly neglected so far and the photographs of the paintings before and after restoration show the dramatic result. Years of accumulated dirt, decaying varnish, ham-handed repairs and Calcutta's own contribution of damp, fungus and insects had nearly finished off this collection.

Featherstone also addresses the delicate question of just how far restoration should go. It is the old battle of restoration vs conservation—restoring a work of art through repair and disguise of the damage versus conservation that only checks further decay. A delicate balance had to be struck between the two at this project and again the writer echoes the plea for an established conservations studio at the Victoria Memorial.

Finally, some good news. The work being done at the Victoria Memorial must have struck a cord in the citizens of Calcutta because recently a publicly funded project has restored the dilapidated Town Hall. Though I hear the Government, which was stopped at the last minute from building a skyscraper on its lawns, is a bit foxed by the effort. They can't think of what to do with the building! Well, if the politicians could get over their ambivalence about British rule then how about turning it into a museum of the Raj? Nostalgic British tourists would arrive in hordes and turn it into an instant shrine. Restoring Calcutta's colonial buildings could finally put the city on the world's tourist map.

Subhadra Sen Gupta is a free lance journalist and writes books for children.

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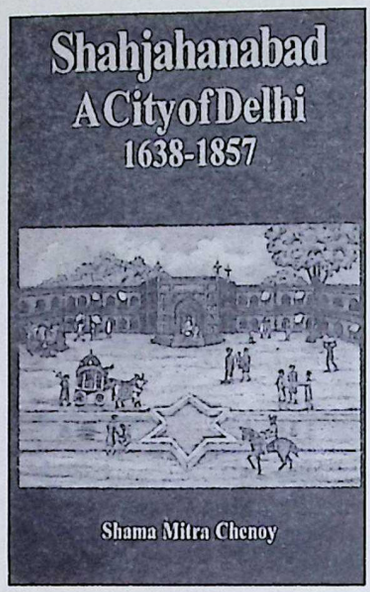
Shahjahanabad: A City with an Identity?

Geeta Arya

SHAHJAHANABAD: A CITY OF DELHI, 1638–1857

By Shama Mitra Chenoy

Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1998, pp. xi+244, Rs. 475.00



After Stephen Blake's monograph on Shahjahanabad, Shama Mitra Chenoy's book major advance in the study of the city of Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi)—the last city to be inhabited in Delhi before the establishment of colonial rule, in 1638 AD. In attempting to formulate a study of Shahjahanabad covering a time-span of almost 200 years, 1638–1857 of eventful history, she has set herself a mammoth task. This book is basically an analysis of the morphology of the city, its growth, development and functional identity. It brings together concerns and methods which at least until recently characterized some quite different types of studies on the city of Delhi.

Mitra Chenoy facilitates her work by dividing the period 1638–1857 into four parts—1638–1659, 1659–1750, 1750–1803 and 1803–1857. The author begins by analysing various theoretical formulations fastened on to Indian cities, by scholars who have compared them to the West Asian, European and "Islamic Cities". Succeedingly, discerning the flaws in their methodology, Mitra Chenoy argues that these truisms fail to do justice to the structures of the urban centres and to the dynamics of their evolutionary pattern. She denounces outright the concept of an "Islamic City" as applied to the city of Delhi as fallacious.

The rest of the book reflects on the significance of the suburbs of the city, and here Mitra Chenoy appears to be in line with F. Braudel's conception of the reciprocity and mutual coexistence of the city and countryside.

What intrigues the author most is Blake's monograph, and she dwells on it in great detail and contends that his work does not give a holistic picture of its development. And his idea of a patrimonial bureaucratic empire did not translate itself into the built form of the city and its urban culture. Emphasizing the futility of comparing Shahjahanabad with cities of Europe and West Asia, she holds that these cities seem to have reflected a different process of social development.

The book then turns to a series of aspects linked with the historical background of the city of Delhi prior to Shahjahanabad and Mitra Chenoy analyses the evolution of Delhi into an urban centre between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. While discussing each city of Delhi and examining its structure of population, she postulates that Delhi as an urban centre had begun to emerge and the life of its inhabitants was not subject to the movements of the Sultan. Determined to make her case, she states that the other sections of society, apart from royalty also contributed to the usage of space and the growth of the urban culture (p. 24). A corollary to this argument is that the development and growth of Delhi was not subject to the physical presence of the Sultan, as has been accepted by many scholars. Rather, as she says, "Delhi remained an important centre of the region, within or without empires" (p. 29). For her, even when the capital was shifted from Delhi, the spate of building activity continued unabated.

The following three chapters primarily examine the spatial and functional continuities, and differences that evolved over a period of hundred years, after the city was inhabited. Thereafter historically analysing the *raison d'etre* for the transfer of capital from Agra to Shahjahanabad, Mitra Chenoy asserts that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the prominence and economic viability of the city had increased. Topographical surveys of the city, however, represents the principal contribution of this book, supplying as they do penetrating analyses of such topics as markets, streets, lanes, forts and public buildings, etc.

Subsequently, giving space to the cityscape, the author tries to highlight an important aspect of urban culture and traces the extent to which the economy of the Mughal Empire was sustained by the economy of the urban centres like the city of Delhi.

An interesting chapter on Shahjahanabad during 1659–1857, suggests that the city in this period witnessed a long process of urban culture marked by an increase in population which seems to have engineered some formalism in the cityscape and also reduced the scope of organized spaces considerably (p. 71). The author states that "the city from being the capital of an Empire gradually got metamorphosed into a bustling metropolis and its administrative role became merely one of the functions it performed. The city became a repositor of the composite culture" (p. 71).

Mitra Chenoy struggles to show this change as reflected in many parts of the cityscape. This takes up half the book. For each phase of urban history of the city, she present a concise yet thorough historical narrative emphasizing socio-economic realities, which is followed by a discussion of the topography, population, demographic and settlement patterns.

The rest of the book reflects on the significance of the suburbs of the city, and here Mitra Chenoy appears to be in line with F. Braudel's conception of the reciprocity and mutual coexistence of the city and countryside. Simultaneously she gives the statistical figures for the population and demographic pattern of the city. What is of immense importance is that Mitra Chenoy is trying to asseverate that throughout its history Shahjahanabad witnessed a constantly evolving settlement pattern, where both the elite and popular traditions existed side by side.

In a tendentious section she seems to be trying to make the reasonable point that the life-style pursued by a broad cross-section of society had several common threads which bound them together, and imparted a distinctiveness to the city. Demonstrating that the city was not divided on communal or sectarian basis (p. 157) she affirms, "the city may not have been a decisive instrument of social change, but it definitely reflected the process of transitions. When the Mughal Empire began to totter, some functions of the city lost their primacy, while others assumed greater significance" (p. 193). This, however, represents something of a challenge to its earlier writings in the city of Delhi.

Hence, by focusing her analysis on the functionality of the city, the author has been able to set her findings in the comprehensive context of urban culture, and thereby draws certain convincing conclusions about the nature and structure of Shahjahanabad. Nonetheless, Mitra Chenoy ignores the consciousness of community-identity among the various sections of the society. Moreover, when the author talks about inter-regional and inter-professional mobility among the middle sections of society (p. 146), she does not reflect on the tensions created by this mobility. Such considerations would have widened the scope of an already broad study.

These gaps notwithstanding, the author in her eleven evenly balanced chapters takes care to contextualize her arguments within the broader time frame. She draws on a wide range of sources both primary and secondary, including architectural and cartographic material. The useful tables, maps and kaleidoscopic plates with which the text is illustrated augment its persuasiveness. Her work carries a pleasing book-jacket of the city prepared by S. Banerjee. On the other hand, editing and proof-reading of the text has been less than careful.

Undoubtedly, Mitra Chenoy's work encourages us to rethink our notions of the structure and functionality of Shahjahanabad. This book should have broad appeal to those who are interested in the history of the city and urban culture.

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Trauma Of Dismemberment

Lt. Gen. I.S. Gill (Retd.)

THE BETRAYAL OF EAST PAKISTAN

By Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi

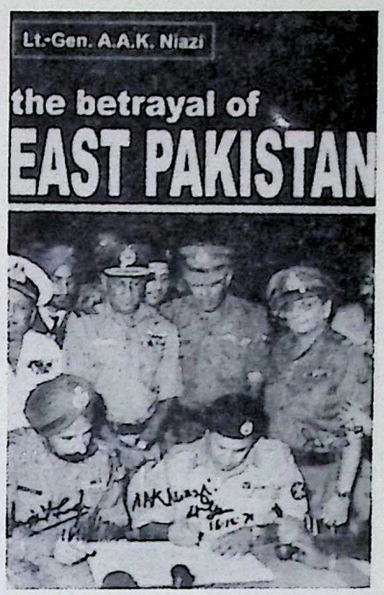
Manohar Publishers, 1998, pp. 321, Rs. 450.00

Islamabad and Dhaka were separated by 2000 km of India and except for religion there was hardly anything in common between the Muslims of East and West Pakistan. Customs and traditions, diet, dress all failed to merge. The most emotive issue was language. The West Pakistanis feared Bengali domination in a federal system with 'One man—One vote', especially as 20 per cent of the population of East Pakistan was Hindu. "Unless these things are understood, it is difficult to comprehend the true picture of the 1971 war in East Pakistan which was a deliberate debacle, pre-planned and pre-arranged by President Yahya and Mr Bhutto" says the author in his Preface.

During the war with India in 1965, East Pakistan was not attacked. After the war Zulfikar Ali Bhutto stated in the National Assembly that Pakistan had been "saved by China". This caused consternation. The Bengalis had been content with the bulk of the armed forces being located in West Pakistan since the concept was that 'the battle of the East will be fought in the West". How they felt neglected and the author says that to a "certain extent their anxieties were not unfounded." Discontent continued to simmer. The split came to a head in the elections of 1970. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League won 160 out of 162 seats in East Pakistan while Bhutto and his Pakistan People's party secured 81 out of 138 seats in the West. Bhutto would not accept this clear mandate. In February 1971, according to the author, the Larkana conspiracy was planned, which was to quit East Pakistan and let it go its own way. If this was indeed the Yahya-Bhutto game plan it was gone about in a peculiar way—by massacring civilians, thus earning odium at home and abroad, and suffering a military defeat with all its consequences.

On 7 March 1971 General Tikka Khan took over in East Pakistan and acted with great severity to suppress the rebellion led by Mujib. On 4 April General Niazi arrived in Dhaka to relieve Tikka Khan of military command. Tikka Khan became Governor. Niazi continued action to suppress the insurgency, which he said was completed by the end of May. In the process millions of refugees moved into India. The East Pakistan army and police units rebelled and joined the Freedom Fighters (FF) or Mukti Bahini (MB). By the end of May about half of them had been engaged and disarmed. However Indian training camps near the border were arming and training civilian refugees and sending them back to operate inside East Pakistan. Niazi has come out with an inflated figure of these FF, which is hardly surprising. The Indian figures are almost as confusing and inaccurate. However, every Bengali was against Niazi's forces and until the outbreak of war their existence was an uneasy one at best. As the year went by and the strength and organization of the FF increased, their attacks against Border Outposts (BOPs), most often supported by the Indian Army or Border Security Force (BSF), grew. On 21st November 1971 these attacks were stepped up in several areas but especially at Boyra, West of Jessore, where tanks and aircraft were used. Pakistan lost 3 F86 fighters. Previously border incursions had been followed by withdrawal but now the attackers remained in occupation of captured areas.

In Niazi's view the war must be considered to have broken out on 21 November and not on 3 December when Pakistan started her attack in the West. Up to that time he had lost over 4000 men killed in action he says. There is considerable justification for his view, in my opinion. Niazi got his last reinforcement, of two infantry battalions, in November. This brought his strength up to three divisions and an ad hoc division—a total strength of 35 infantry battalions and the equivalent of 11 artillery regiments against the Indian force employed of approximately eight divisions comprising 83 infantry battalions and about 35 artillery regiments. (These comparisons of relative strengths discount East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCAF) and Indian FF, BSF etc.). In the air the single squadron of the Pakistan Air Force was eliminated by the fifteen Indian squadrons which could operate. The Indian Navy blockaded the Southern Coast of East Pakistan. Niazi reckoned that the Indian General



Arora had a 10:1 advantage over him. This was an exaggeration.

Basically Niazi had two tasks to carry out (although it appears that no directive was given to him in writing):

a. To defend East Pakistan against external aggression; and
b. to prevent any (substantial) piece of territory from falling into the hands of the rebels on which they could establish Bangladesh.

To carry out his orders he had BOPs manned by EPCAF, those BOPs covering main approaches manned by regular troops and the bulk of the regular troops concentrated in strong points and fortresses to fight a proper defensive battle. Concentration was on covering approaches to Dhaka. Niazi complains that the Pakistan government denied him the right of hot pursuit of the FF into Indian territory and that this was a part of the planned treachery.

The Pakistan Ari Force opened attacks on India on the afternoon of 3rd December with weak and scattered air strikes which had no effect. The ground attacks in Chhamb and Hussainiwala met with success but in the end India had gained 5500 sq miles of West Pakistan territory. Niazi says that it was an important part of his holding role that he should not allow any Indian troops to be transferred to West Pakistan and that he succeeded in this. Most of his fortresses and strong points were still intact at the time of the cease-fire, because the Indians had by-passed them. To capture Dhaka would have cost the Indians dear, but for the blunders of the Pakistan High Command.

Indian generals who have written about this war are of the view that the Simla Conference resulted in frittering away the military gains that resulted to us—5,500 square miles of territory and "93,000 POWs" (actually only two thirds of these were armed personnel, the rest were civilian detainees; Niazi's figures are correct). Niazi's criticism of Bhutto at the Simla Conference is mainly that Bhutto conspired with Mrs. Gandhi to release Mujib, to recognize Bangladesh and to delay the release of prisoners. He says: "On return from Simla, Bhutto's coterie had the cheek to say that Bhutto charmed Mrs Gandhi during their meeting in seclusion but from the result achieved it appears that it was Mrs. Gandhi who charmed Bhutto."

I have been unable to locate any complimentary reference to Indian generalship or planning. He scoffs at Indian 'hype' about a "lightning war", referring to it as a "snail's pace campaign". He claims that the he had to get orders from the Army Chief, the Governor and the President to surrender his command before he did so. He was prepared to fight it out to the last in Dhaka but was told that he had to surrender "to save West Pakistan". General Niazi has a weakness common to almost all writers of memoirs and autobiographies: he does no wrong, makes no mistakes and makes predictions which come true one hundred per cent. Nevertheless this book is a gold mine for military historians and our military schools. It is well-written and edited, has good, clear maps and has some photographs of interest.

Note:

I was not aware until I read this book that Lt. Gen. Niazi was removed from service in 1975 and denied a pension. He, at least, appears to have been betrayed by the Pakistani leadership. Much had been going on in this part of the world in the three months immediately preceding his taking over the military leadership in East Pakistan from General Tikka Khan. The JVP insurgency had broken out in Sri Lanka and that country asked for military help from its neighbours and others; both India and Pakistan responded. An Indian airlines plane hijacked to Lahore by Kashmiris led to India cancelling overflight rights to Pakistan aircraft—flights between East and West Pakistan had to be via Sri Lanka. India held general elections in West Bengal amid political tension so acute that two infantry divisions and the Parachute Brigade were moved into the State to ensure proper conduct of the elections. This large force would have given the impression of a threat to East Pakistan.

***Lt. Gen. I.S. Gill** (Retd.) was Director, Military Operations, India, 1971–1973.*

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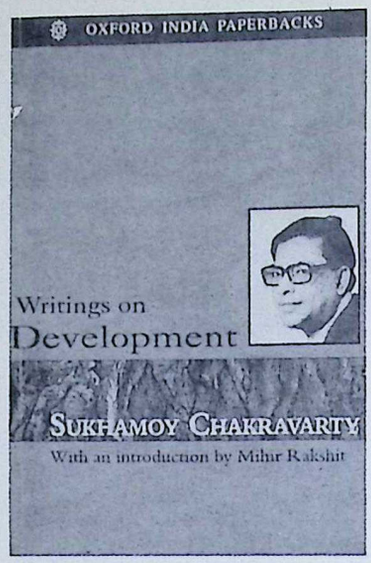
Sukhamoy Chakravarty:
Scholar Extraordinary

Pulin B. Nayak

WRITINGS ON DEVELOPMENT

By Sukhamoy Chakravarty

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 310, Rs. 350.00



Sukhamoy Chakravarty was unquestionably one of the most gifted and significant Indian economists of the post Independence era. For most of his active professional life he held the Chair of Mathematical Economics at the Delhi School of Economics (DSE) which he joined in 1964. Even though he was inducted into the Planning Commission in 1971 and was subsequently involved in economic policy making at the highest levels, he continued his close association with the DSE where he taught till his untimely demise in 1990 at the age of 56.

Even though in the last part of his life Sukhamoy had had serious health problems, he nevertheless had an extremely full life. Other than his Professorship at the DSE and the stint in the Planning Commission during 1971–77, he was the Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council of the Prime Minister, under several different Prime Ministers. He had held visiting assignments in many leading universities, including MIT, Johns Hopkins, Erasmus and Cambridge. From 1987 he had been the Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, and he had held, in addition, numerous other major posts.

Sukhamoy was a person of deep erudition, a scholar extraordinary. Anyone who had known him or come in touch with him, whether it is the Nobel Laureate Paul Samuelson of MIT, or his exact contemporary, the distinguished Amartya Sen, now Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, or the generations of students whom he taught at the DSE, would unhesitatingly testify to his rather formidable intellectual prowess. In a festschrift piece entitled 'Homage to Chakravarty', Samuelson writes: "At any round seminar table, where Chakravarty sat was the head of the table!" In the same piece where Samuelson appreciatively describes Chakravarty as a 'Polymath' and 'Sage', he goes on: "Before Sukhamoy came to the Masachusetts Institute of Technology from Calcutta and Rotterdam, already he knew everything. At least everything that I might want to know. The Hegel dialectic and Hamiltonian conservation of energy. How Locke related to Erasmus." Amartya Sen fondly acknowledges Sukhamoy's 'astonishing intellectual power' and tells us: 'When we were students together at Presidency College, he not only knew more economics than all of us put together, he seemed to know more physics than the physics students, more history than the historians, and clearly had more knowledge of the latest developments in mathematics than those specialising in that field. His company encouraged laziness, since it was always possible to eschew hard work and to ask, instead, Sukhamoy for a little lecture on the subject, which would invariably be delivered with breathtaking clarity".

Sukhamoy's early interests were in the theory of economic growth and planning. His doctoral dissertation, completed under the first Nobel Laureate in economics—Jan Tinbergen (who shared the prize with Ragnar Frisch) in Rotterdam, Holland, was published as *The Logic of Investment Planning (1959)*. Chakravarty at that time was engaged in research on the problem of optimal economic growth, first addressed by the brilliant Cambridge mathematical economist Frank Ramsey in 1928. Chakravarty was using techniques from control theory and dynamic programming, which were being pioneered by the Russian blind mathematician L. Pontryagin and the American Richard Bellman respectively in the late fifties. Through the early sixties Chakravarty came out with a number of significant contributions in the area of optimal savings and growth which were marked by a high level of mathematical rigour.

Towards the end of the sixties and certainly by the time Sukhamoy joined the Planning Commission as Member in 1971, his intellectual and professional concerns appeared to have shifted away from formal mathematical modelling and they were now centred on the problems of practical planning and policy making. It was not that Sukhamoy had shifted his focus away from theory. Far from it, for Sukhamoy's passion for theory continued throughout. The interest was now on the conceptual and fundamental underpinnings of theory, especially as they impinged on issues of economic development, rather than the technical, and often quite mechanical, formulations of models that were typically valued in the corridors of academe. To this Sukhamoy brought his continued and consuming interest in the history of economic thought to illumine the problems at hand.

The papers in this volume constitute the mature reflections of Chakravarty, specifically in the areas of development theory and development economics. There are eleven essays in all, written during 1973–89, with the first being the oft cited 'Reflections on the 'Growth Process in the Indian Economy' which was delivered at the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad in 1973. Barring one hitherto unpublished paper on Kalecki and development economics, all the essays in the volume have been published in journals or as monographs. The collection is introduced by a succinct piece by Mihir Rakshit entitled "Development Economics: A Synoptic View".

The paper that is chronologically the last, published in 1989, a year before Chakravarty's death, is the first paper in this volume. It is entitled 'Development Economics in Perspective'. Sukhamoy opens the paper by drawing a distinction between 'development theorizing' and 'development economics'. While the latter emerged as a distinct area of study during the post war years in the writings of Rosenstein-Rodan, Mandelbaum, Nurkse and others, the former has its lineage going back to the founders of the subject including Sir James Steuart, Adam Smith and Friedrich List. Even though Steuart was eclipsed by the awesome stature of Adam Smith, Marx had praised Steuart for his commanding historical vision and for charting out the tasks for the statesmen of the day to speed up development. As for List (1789–1846), he operated in a milieu of nascent industrial capitalism in Germany. Whereas capitalism had already taken solid roots in England and had made Smith and Ricardo into free traders, the backward condition of Germany made List a champion of economic nationalism. List gave up an academic career for the sake of political activity and journalism. He had many admirers in the US, Germany, as well as in many 'backward countries' including India where the greatest among the first generation economists, M.G. Ranade was his acolyte. As a judge in the Bombay High Court, Ranade had enunciated an approach to Indian development that was clearly inspired by List's 'National System of Political Economy'. In this book List had formulated a theory of protection that was particularly adapted to the needs of the youthful German industry. List had rejected *laissez-faire* and had justified tariffs as educative measures which were to be used to nurse infant industries.

Among the twentieth century authors of whom Chakravarty writes appreciatively are the British economist Vera Anstey, the Rumanian Mikail Manoilesco and the Polish Michael Kalecki. Although Anstey was not a theorist as the term is understood these days, she had perfectly imbibed the spirit of Marshall's *Principles*. In her perceptive study on the *Economic Development of India* (1952) Anstey had highlighted the role of economic incentives as they were mediated through institutional arrangements, especially in agriculture. Chakravarty argues that the works of Manoilesco and Kalecki were a precursor to the later theorizing by Nurkse and others.

The explosion of the literature on development economics in the forties and fifties was directly an offshoot of the Keynesian revolution. According to Chakravarty this was more in the nature of a change in intellectual outlook. It was not that Keynes had said something significant about the nature of the development problem. It was rather his successful redefinition of the agenda of the state which was first stated succinctly in his article 'The End of *Laissez Faire*' (1926) and carried to a successful completion in his 'General Theory' (1936).

In the writings on development economics during the fifties and sixties to

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which there were substantial contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Mandelbaum, Nurkse, Scitovsky and others, much attention was focussed on the debate on 'balanced' versus 'unbalanced' growth. With hindsight one may say that this was possibly a sterile debate. Rodan had argued for the 'Big Push' since he recognized the importance of complementarities in production. This led him to argue for a much larger scale of capital transfer to China and India. The essential idea behind this was to activate the large body of the disguisedly unemployed with the influx of capital to begin a process of productive transformation of these economies. For Kalecki as well as Ragnar Nurkse, the existence of disguised unemployment itself meant an implied potential saving and Nurkse's main concern was to devise a way to mobilize this potential to further economic growth. In contrast to these models a distinct formulation was offered by W. Arthur Lewis in 1954. Lewis's model formulation was in the classical tradition where the key element was the availability of unlimited supplies of labour at a subsistence wage. Chakravarty offers a critique of the Lewis model and points out that Lewis was not at all precise as to how the subsistence sector was organized nor was he clear whether this sector could generate its own dynamic. Further, the main link between the modern and the subsistence sector was through labour transfer which, Chakravarty argues, was not analyzed with any precision. In this connection Chakravarty notes the importance of Kaldor's thesis on the need for a growing agricultural surplus to give a boost to particularly those industries enjoying increasing returns to scale. In the final analysis Chakravarty makes a case for incorporating the role of knowledge and properly formulating the role of institutions, social, political as well as economic, in fully understanding the process of development.

In a significant contribution (Chapter 2) Chakravarty makes a cogent case for a synthesis between the Keynesian position and the 'classics' for a better understanding of the constraints facing developing countries like India. The classical approach has focussed principally on real wages, technology, savings and generally on freeing the constraints on the supply side. Chakravarty however emphasizes the relevance of Keynesian economics for developing countries on grounds that wage bargains are conducted in money terms and the decisions to save and invest are not undertaken by the same economic agents. It is also the case that long term investment in less developed countries is inhibited owing to uncertainly as well as a highly imperfect credit system. Chakravarty argues that it is important to ensure that the potential surplus is not wasted is an underutilization of resources, conspicuous consumption or socially wasteful accumulation of unproductive assets in the form of gold. All of this emphasizes the importance of appropriate demand management, and hence the need for a synthesis between the Keynesian and the classical position.

All through these essays Chakravarty makes a strong case for getting away from the exclusive preoccupation with the 'market failure' paradigm or a simple 'stages of growth' argument that was advanced by Walt Rostow. For Chakravarty it was more important to think of economics as a subject which deals with 'social provisioning of goods and services'. On the subject of social provisioning Sukhamoy was clear about according special attention to the concept of capital. In this context he appreciatively refers to the contributions of Thorstein Veblen who had carefully drawn a distinction between tangible and intangible assets. For Veblen the latter were just as important as the former and he had observed: "Without access to such a common stock of immaterial equipment no individual and no fraction of the community can make a living, much less make an advance."

Chakravarty dismisses the preoccupation with the discussion as market versus the Plan as being 'much too crude'. For him it was more important to engage in a deeper study of economic organization 'from the point of view of ensuring creativity, growth and equity'. The one major twentieth century economist who had emphasized the 'creative' aspect of the process of capitalist development was the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter and Chakravarty appears to have been progressively attracted to Schumpeter's formulations in his mature years.

Perhaps the most substantive piece in this collection is the third essay (Chapter 3) entitled "Alternative Approaches to a Theory of Economic Growth: Marx, Marshall and Schumpeter". This was delivered as the R.C. Dutt lecture on Political Economy in 1980 at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. Growth theory had always been Sukhamoy's home turf, and Sukhamoy was a great admirer of both Marx as well as Schumpeter. Both these factors contribute to making this a scintillating piece with some bold and unusual formulations. Schumpeter's own estimation of Marx was not without some ambivalence. Schumpeter was dismissive of the Marxian labour theory of value, but he had the highest estimation for Marx's scholarship as well as his sociological insights. Schumpeter himself was something of a polymath scholar, as is evident from his magisterial, more than a thousand pages long, A *History of Economic Analysis (1954)*. Scumpeter was born in 1883, the same year as Marx died, and even though he had had an aristocratic upbringing in Vienna, he was something of a rebel in his economic thinking and has often been described as the *enfant terrible* amongst his Austrian fellow economists. Schumpeter had started his economics career as a great admirer of the formal, mathematical modelling in economics and for him the greatest economist was the Frenchman Leon Walras, the father of general equilibrium theory. However as the years passed, Schumpeter became conscious of his limitations as a mathematical economist and self confessedly shifted his attention to economic history as well as history of economic analysis.

In the third essay, Sukhamoy identifies the two major contending approaches to growth theorizing as the Mill-Marshall tradition on the one hand and the Marx-Schumpeter tradition on the other. Both these approaches have their lineage from Smith and Ricardo. The modern day Solow type growth theories are placed in the Mill-Marshall tradition. This approach, particularly in its neo-classical versions is seriously impaired due to its neglect of institutional factors. Chakravarty finds favour with the Marx-Schumpter tradition essentially because it looks at the irreversible nature of historical changes, the importance of entrepreneurial effort in raising productivity, the role of credit and the structural breaks or discontinuities in the growth process. The latter tradition is also more amenable to considering the important question of indivisibilities, embodied innovation and the process of 'creative destruction' which was emphasized by Schumpeter.

Commenting further on the fascination that Chakravarty self-avowedly had for Schumpeter, Amartya Sen writes: "To some extent Schumpeter had become a vehicle of expression of Sukhamoy's discontent with the present state of economic theory. That discontent was very strongly felt, and on more than one occasion Sukhamoy had outlined to me his plan to do an ambitious work of reconstruction of economic theory—more institutional and a great deal more historical than what we currently have." Sukhamoy's untimely death has prevented the possibility of this work.

There are two significant essays, one on M. Kalecki's work on development economics and the other on the relevance of Marxist economics to contemporary development economics. Both of these essays question the mainstream mode of analyzing the development processes in low income countries. As early as 1938, Kalecki had cogently argued in his appreciative review of Manoilesco's book that the way to develop for backward countries was not via protectionist industrialization. He had emphasized the need for land reform to overcome the institutional barriers posed by an obsolete agrarian structure and he had also seen the possibility of mobilizing the surplus inherent in the labour force characterized by disguised unemployment. The key issue for him was to ensure that wage goods posed no special bottleneck. He believed that this could be brought about by suitable institutional reforms. While Kalecki was no doctrinaire Marxist, he had imbibed enough of Marx's theory of history to locate a close relationship between the nature of production relations and the growth of productive forces. For him the main task at hand was to free agriculture in underdeveloped countries from the constraint of semi-feudal forces. Chakravarty critically examines the view due to Baran that the Third World nations would face serious obstacles to their economic and social advancement due to the contradictions arising from private property rights and the dominance of monopoly capitalism. With the serious economic crises that the East Asian countries are going through Chakravarty's plea for extending rather than abandoning the Marxian approach assumes a poignant force.

The last three essays focus on some analytical and policy issues on the Indian economy. In Chapter nine there is a discussion of the Lewis, Ricardian and Mahalanobis approaches as an understanding of the growth processes of the Indian economy. There is a discussion of the interdependence between agriculture and industry in redesigning development strategies, the need for changes in the structure of property rights required for inducing technological improvements and the need for preventing the abuse of monopoly powers. In Chapter ten there is an examination of the question as to whether a 'narrowing' home market poses a problem so far as India's growth prospects are concerned. The answer is in the affirmative, for Chakravarty rejects the notion that the 'market problem' is a relatively minor one in developing countries as opposed to mature capitalist countries. Chakravarty concludes that the factors that tend to produce

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demand deficiency' in relative terms have a lot to do with a growing rigidity in the structure of prices throughout the economy, both agricultural and industrial, with an upward trend imparted through a highly permissive monetary policy and a myopic character of private investment. In the final chapter, dealing with monetary policy, a case is made for monetary targeting with feedback for preserving macro economic balance. Chakravarty cautions against adapting any simplistic formula on regulation of money supply or interest rates owing to the quality of the Indian economy in several important aspects.

There are many who have expressed the view that Sukhamoy's move to the Planning Commission in 1971 and his subsequent involvement with governmental policy-making was detrimental to his growth as a scholar and the economics profession was deprived as a result of many potential contributions from him. An exact assessment of the loss to the profession can never really be made and a discussion of this problem, by its very nature, has to be purely speculative. By the early seventies it was clear that Sukhamoy's fascination for mathematical model building had definitely declined. Even if he were to continue being a pure academic his intellectual output was no longer likely to be in the area of formal mathematical theory. It is conceivable that he might have made more substantive intellectual contributions in the areas of development theory and the history of economic thought than he actually did after he joined the government. But one can never be absolutely sure as to whether his commitments as a planner and government policy maker actually helped or hindered the process of his intellectual growth.

Sukhamoy always revelled in ideas. Till the very end he fundamentally believed that cerebral, intellectual activities could transform society and human lives. In the early years Sukhamoy had firmly believed in the applicability of mathematical reasoning. Still, towards the last decade of his life his enthusiasm for formal modelling had been shaken. Still there was never any doubt in his mind about the power of knowledge and reasoning. As Sen puts it 'it seemed to Sukhamoy now that the knowledge that was needed had to be more institutional and historical, and the reasoning that was required must be less formal and more hospitable to imprecise but important concepts and categories'.

Pulin B. Nayak is Professor of Economics at the Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University.

Negotiating Just Recompense

Gopal K. Kadekodi

BARGAINING POWER, WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR MARKETS IN INDIA

By Gaurav Datt

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 224, Rs. 295.00

It is generally difficult to combine a good theory with empiricism. This is particularly the case with the social sciences. Gaurav Datt has tried to correct this impression with his venture on analysing a very complex issue of wage determination in the rural labour markets in India.

The characteristics of rural labour markets, as studied by a large number of social scientists are: unorganized casual rural labourers, existence of minimum wage rate more as evidencing disequilibrium in the labour market, discriminating wages between male and female, high female labour inputs in agriculture, labour productivity being independent of wage structure, a variety of labour contractual systems, and finally highly seasonal employment patterns. Interested readers can have a good review of these in the book. There are evidences of real wages in rural India going up, as stated by Gaurav Datt. Can this be attributed to improved productivity or improved bargaining power among the rural labour? While most neo-classical economists argue in favour of the first, the author takes the position of the latter. It is this institutional approach to the understanding of the labour market that makes the book different. But can increasing wage bargaining reduce the wage differential between male and female or between regions, improve the living standards or income distribution of rural labour, reduce seasonality of employment, influence the output prices etc., are the logical policy oriented questions. They are handled in the book with a theoretical model of wage bargaining and equilibrium (to be more precise, Nash equilibrium). Can the present wage structure and the manner in which wage rate and employment are determined reason out the social and economic milieu of rural India? What are the prospects of bringing in an institution of bargaining in rural labour market? Some of these issues are left out by the author. Maybe he is at them in his other works.

There are evidences of real wages in rural India going up, as stated by Gaurav Datt. Can this be attributed to improved productivity or improved bargaining power among the rural labour? While most neo-classical economists argue in favour of the first, the author takes the position of the latter. It is this institutional approach to the understanding of the labour market that makes the book different.

I always prefer to read the last chapters of such a book first, though to any serious reader, I will recommend chapters three and four as well. One does not like to propose a theory only to disapprove of it subsequently. Therefore, the review or testing of labour market models such as 'Efficiency wage theory', or 'subsistence wage theory' or supply-demand model etc., are a bit out of place here. What makes the book worth having on the shelf is the formulation of a 'wage bargaining model', imposed on a non-existent (i.e., unorganized, non-unionized) bargaining labour market in which casual labourers set the strategies as either to undercut the existing wage rate or not to undercut. The research will be complete when the author or anyone else can take up the question of bringing such a bargaining platform in the rural settings of India. Once again, as the author has noted, the solution exists in a cooperative Nash (otherwise, it would be a typical prisoner's dilemma) equilibrium. A similar model was framed in a policy-oriented study published by the same publisher in 1980 under the title 'Participatory Development: An approach to the management of common property resources'.

With a model of profit to the farmer (hiring wage employment), labour demand and bargained wage (i.e., Nash equilibrated, with or without symmetric pay-offs), the author sets out to estimate several parameters, among which, of immediate interest are the bargaining power parameter and disagreement pay off (often also called threat pay-off). Using the primary survey data collected by ICRISAT from ten villages covering on an average forty households per village, econometric models are estimated. The bargaining power is invariably found to be highly in favour of the employer, not a surprising result. More interesting is the finding that the bargaining power is much less among the female workers, who contribute up to eighty per cent of total labour force in some villages! Therefore, it is the lack of equal bargaining power and not so much productivity differences that can explain the wage differences between the male and female workers. This is a very important finding, having policy implications. Better education for women, encouraging them to collectivize and also asking a higher differential minimum wage can improve their bargaining power. Can bargaining power explain at least the high wages in peak agricultural seasons? The author finds no evidence for this.

Neither does bargaining power seem to be relevant in understanding the regional variation in wage rates in India. But certainly, the unequal bargaining power can be responsible for the highly unequal income distribution that prevails among the rural labour class.

What I like of the author is his admitting at the end that this study has been a first step of a larger research agenda I have already pointed to many of them earlier.

Gopal K. Kadekodi is a professor at the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi. His research interests cover themes such as income distribution, poverty, growth, energy, environment and macro-economic modelling. He is the author of several books in these research areas. He is associated with several international journals and member of a large number of international and national professional organizations.

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Lessons for Urban Planners

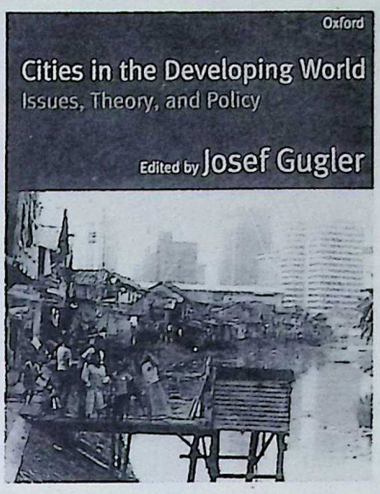
A.G. Krishna Menon

CITIES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, ISSUES, THEORY AND POLICY
Edited by Josef Gugler
Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 396, price not stated.

Urban planning in India has not achieved its objectives. This should be obvious to anyone who lives in Indian cities, large or small. Housing shortage, chaotic transport and pollution are endemic problems. These problems along with the phenomenon of proliferating slums and uncontrolled development are the defining characteristic of our cities, not planned development. Planners invariably cite the lack of committed political will to implement plans and the paucity of financial resources as reasons for the present state of the urban environment. Of course, this is partly true, but one is also beginning to realize that the professional is as much to blame for the mess that has been created. The fact is that the urban planner is not in touch with ground realities and does not understand the dynamics of contemporary urban development.

The book being reviewed makes this clear, though not directly and not by specifically citing the Indian context. It relates issues, theory and policy on matters relating to urban development in conditions not too dissimilar which makes one realize the inadequacies of Indian practice. It is a collection of twenty-five essays largely based on the Latin American experience, and brings together a good range and depth of studies on urban development (e.g. government control in China, ethnicity in Africa, squatter settlements in Latin America).

No doubt similar studies are undertaken in India, but no urban planner seeks to relate them to issues, theory and policy of urban development. Urban development policy in India does not emanate from research and rigorous analysis of issues. Policies, such as they are, derive from simplistic perceptions rooted in class biases, inappropriate theories of urban development and antiquated town planning laws. Consequently, urban planners in India have not come to terms with the implications of the dramatic shift in economic policy from one that emphasized the importance of state-directed planning to that which emphasizes the manipulation of markets to achieve social and economic goals. The emphasis on markets and economic liberalization has already had profound effect on migration and urban development during the last decade which needs to be considered while evolving policy. The only Indian case study in this volume, discusses the "Changing Migration Strategies in Deccan Maharashtra, 1885–1990". However, urban planners in India are unaware of, or do not take into account such studies in their work. Instead of fashioning policy to changing circumstances, urban development is achieved by attempting to implement a Master Plan of dubious merit through the police powers of the State. The practice of Master Planning in India is an anachronistic relic of the 1940s when planners all over the world imagined that they could direct urban development to fit an idealized pattern of land uses. As this book indicates, the rest of the world has moved away from such deterministic strategies of urban development but the planner in India continues to cling to them. Master Planning is also at variance with the intent of the recent 74th Amendment to the Constitution, because the people are not consulted in the typically top-down approach it follows.



The book also makes clear that urban planning is an interdisciplinary profession. While lip service is paid to this fact in academic institutions in India, it is seldom acknowledged in practice where it is almost exclusively an exercise in spatial planning through the instrument of the Master Plan. These exercises do not take into account the rational economic and social decisions of the people who are expected to inhabit these spaces. In fact, it may not be outlandish to state that urban planners in India generally work *against* the natural behavioural tendencies of the people they plan for, so failure of their plans is inevitable. Such exercises are undertaken in the naive belief that the 'planner knows best', and the tragedy of Indian urbanism is that the planner obviously does not, either about the phenomenon of urbanization or the dynamics of urban development.

Under the circumstances this book should be read by urban planners in India, because it deals with a diverse range of case studies. But I suspect that it will be overlooked because a) it does not focus on conditions in India (as in some other disciplines, urban planners too believe that conditions in India are *sui generis*), and b) it looks at the problem of urban development through the lens of associated disciplines, a process with which the Indian planner is unfamiliar. More is the pity, because it is possible to learn from cross-cultural experiences and also from the sociologists, anthropologists, architects, economists, geographers, planners, political scientists and psychologists whose contributions are included in this volume.

These essays explore two views on urbanization: the 'modernization theory' and the 'urban bias' approach. From a modernization perspective, the process of urbanization achieves the transition from a rural to an urban society which is conducive to the transformation from 'traditional' to 'modern' society in terms of both the technology of production and the orientation of individuals and social institutions. Proponents of the urban bias thesis however, counter that in this process policy-makers tend to favour urban areas over rural by disproportionately allocating resources to the cities, especially the capital cities, with results that are both inequitable and inefficient.

In India the policy on urbanization of the last fifty years has generally been Janus-like, because it has attempted to modernize and urbanize with a guilt-ridden anti-urban bias. Predictably, this has led to neither effective urban development nor rural regeneration. Charles Correa attempted to send a clear 'urban bias' signal through the National Urbanization Commission Report (1988), but the profession was typically ambivalent, and allowed the message to sink without a trace. The sad fact is that today, fifty years after Independence, there is no rational urbanization or housing policy in the country.

These policies must evolve through dialogue and debate involving the multifarious dimensions of urban development. This does not take place in academic institutions and certainly not in practice. This book and a companion volume entitled *The Urban Transformation of the Developing World* (not being reviewed in this article) taken together are good models for engaging in such a dialogue in India. The profession needs to shed its elitist and anachronistic vision, and plan *with* the people and not *for* (which in practice, translates to *against*) the people. As a contributor to this collection states: "Third World city problems in the last decade of the twentieth century cannot be tackled with weak, ineffective, and unrepresentative forms of urban government. They cannot be tackled with a legal system and an institutional structure little changed from late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century precedents, most of which were imported from alien cultures and originally applied under very different economic circumstances and political structures" (p. 271). There are many such lessons for Indian urban planners in this book.

A.G. Krishna Menon is an architect-urban planner with a practice in Delhi since 1972 which has included several architectural heritage conservation projects. Has simultaneously been teaching and is currently the Director of TVB School of Habitat Studies, New Delhi.

If current trends in the deterioration of conditions are to be slowed, halted, or reversed, some basic questions have to be addressed. Perhaps first is what measures should governments adopt to establish the pre-conditions for a more equitable, efficient, and citizen-directed urban development that also responds to the shortage of capital, the institutional limitations, and (for many nations) economic stagnation.

Reviewing the past 30 years, the evidence does not suggest a dimunition in the role of government which for more than a decade has become the standard response. It suggests the need for a different role—more activist, more representative, and more supportive of citizen efforts. One of the first steps for governments is to inform their citizens about their plans and the real possibilities for their implementation. This might appear politically dangerous, given the scarce public resources invested in cities, and the criticisms that such announcements might provoke. But more open participatory forms of government are an essential part of addressing the fundamental problems of Third World cities. These require a frankness and honesty which have hardly characterized the actions of most governments. To elude the honest dissemination of such information is not only dangerous but it also reinforces governments' present isolation.

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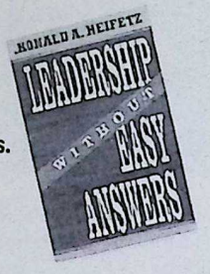

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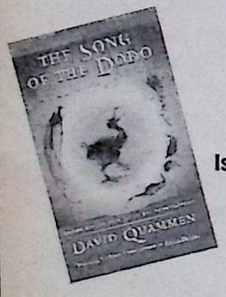

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Letter from London

Stephen Moss

One of the boom areas in UK publishing is science books. But these are not technical tomes aimed at a scientifically sophisticated audience; rather they are popular science books aimed at a general audience. This autumn's catalogues are bulging with them: *The Fifth Miracle* by Paul Davies, *Six Not-So-Easy Pieces* by Richard Feynman, *The Red Hourglass* by Gordon Grice, *Unweaving the Rainbow* by Richard Dawkins, *Consilience* by Edward O Wilson, *Galileo's Daughter* by Dava Sobel, and on and on. Science is, to use the marketer's demotic, sexy.

I was a judge for this year's Rhone-Poulenc Science Book awards, and at the recent prize-giving ceremony at London's Science Museum, biologist and author Lewis Wolpert contrasted the bumper crop of titles under consideration in 1998 with the situation when he judged the inaugural awards ten years ago. The books were fewer in number then, less lavishly produced and more circumscribed in ambition. The winner in 1988, appropriately enough, was *Living with Risk*, which was produced by the British Medical Association. The author appears to have been anonymous.

Things are rather different now. More than 100 books were entered for the prize

this year; the winning title, by Jared Diamond, was beautifully produced (courtesy of Jonathan Cape); the subject was anything but circumscribed (*Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years*); and authors are certainly not anonymous. Indeed, they are superstars: articulate, accessible, media-friendly and able to command huge advances. Risk is no longer a factor for these big-name writers.

Diamond's was not the only book to demonstrate vaulting ambition. Richard Fortey was shortlisted for *Life: An Unauthorized Biography*, which aimed to encapsulate four billion years of pre-human life on earth. David Deutsch offered *The Fabric of Reality*, which aimed to divine the "theory of everything", to offer a deep scientific logic as an alternative to God. Among titles that did not make the cut were *The Life of the Cosmos; Time, Science and Philosophy;* and *The Whole Shebang*. These were not, you felt, books with a limited canvas.

By a happy coincidence, when the first science book prize was being awarded to the BMA ten years ago, another science title was appearing. Indeed, it has just reappeared in an edition to mark its tenth anniversary. The book was Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (which, oddly, failed to win the 1989 prize). The big bang had arrived in science publishing. The book sold in its millions, Hawking became a household name, and publishers set out in pursuit of new worlds.

The result, ten years later, is a group of brand-name scientists, almost all called Steve or Stephen (Pinker, Rose, Jones, Jay Gould, Hawking himself, plus odd man out Richard Dawkins), and a slew of "big idea" books dealing with reality, consciousness, the birth of the cosmos and the origins of life. Science has become the new theology—read this book and you will understand, it has "the answer"—and the Steves are both showmen and shamen who will entertain and instruct in equal measure.

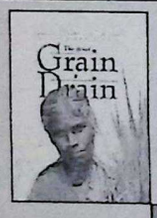
They are great communicators, they write well, their books are fascinating, the story of life is a great one, so is there a problem? No, unless science books become so driven by the need to encapsulate the whole shebang that they lose the excitement of the detail, the small steps that make the larger picture possible. Had Einstein been alive today, you cannot help feeling that he would have had a tough US agent and, rather than writing his ground-breaking paper "On a Heuristic Point of View Concerning the Production and Transformation of Light", would have got a mega advance for God Doesn't Gamble.

Scientific popularizers are pursuing a synthesis, which may be an admirable objective, but their books should not be synthetic. Publishers should perhaps encourage scientists to write in more detail about their work, to attempt to capture the excitement and frustration of their quest for understanding. *Longitude* and *Fermat's Last Theorem*, both books by journalists, demonstrate that the miniature—the quest to solve a particular problem—can be as effective as the "life, the universe and everything" approach.

There is, as novelist Ian McEwan, who chaired the Rhone-Poulenc judges, said at the awards dinner, a far greater popular engagement with science than in the past. The pictures of the moon shots in the 1960s captivated the public (is it a coincidence that most of today's great science communicators would have grown up with Apollo?); "Star Trek", "Star Wars" and the boom in sci-fi tapped the growing interest in crossing final frontiers; and the far from brave new worlds summoned up by Aids, mad cow disease and cloning have forced the public to confront science. As McEwan said, the old, debilitating division into two cultures no longer holds—we are all scientists now.

The appetite for scientific books that pose big questions and the huge sales of fantasy writers such as Terry Pratchett and Iain M. Banks can perhaps be traced to the same source—the attraction of enclosed worlds with their own codes. The challenge for the superstars who dominate the world of science writing is to tap into that popular fascination with science fiction and the huge, mind-expanding growth in Internet use (increasingly we will inhabit this virtual world as much as our physical world) without losing perspective, without offering answers where none really exist.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of the Guardian. *A version of this article appeared in the U.K. in* The Bookseller.



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Resurrecting a Lost Text

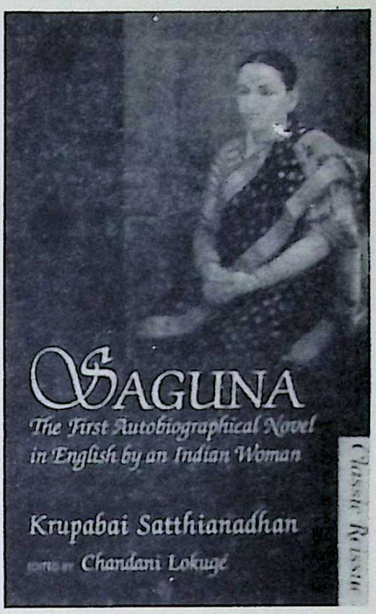
Meenakshi Mukherjee

SAGUNA: THE FIRST AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL IN ENGLISH BY AN INDIAN WOMAN. KRUPABAI SATTHIANADHAN

Edited by Chandani Lokugé

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 182, Rs. 425.00

"I had chafed under the restraints and the ties which formed the common lot of women, and I longed for an opportunity to show that a woman is in no way inferior to a man. How hard it seemed to my mind that marriage should be the goal of women's ambition and that she should spend her days in the light trifles of home life, live to dress, to look pretty, and never know the joy of independence and intellectual work."



The novel contains a long flashback about her parents' conversion to Christianity which would be of interest to readers today—presenting as it does the subjectivity of the father who chose Christianity out of a spirit of metaphysical inquiry, and the unwilling mother on whom it was imposed. The only other description I have come across of a similar predicament for a woman is in Lakshmibai Tilak's Marathi autobiography *Smruti Chitre*.

The passage above might well have been an extract from Jane Eyre—one of the silent screams of rebellion by the heroine which have been foregrounded in most recent readings of the novel, turning what was once considered a prototype of a Mills and Boon romance into an early feminist text.

As it happens, the lines are actually from a novel titled *Saguna*, written by an Indian woman in the nineteenth century, published in Madras more than a hundred years ago. The author was much applauded in the prefatory pages of the original volume not for her radical individualism, but for exactly the opposite reasons—her 'modest, retiring, sensitive and gentle' nature and Christian piety. The name of Krupa Satthianadhan (1862–1894) is not quite unknown to those interested in Indian Writing in English, because her two books—*Kamala* (1894) and *Saguna* (1895) are listed in all the literary histories of the subject, but copies of the novels were difficult to trace, hence hardly any critic could undertake a detailed study of the texts (two recent exceptions being Shubhendu Mund and Jasbir Jain). Oxford University Press Delhi, has to be commended for reprinting this unusual and rare book in a very attractive edition with a Ravi Varma painting on the cover in rich shades of brown and russet. (Incidentally, part of the same painting was used by Penguin India for the cover of Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time* in 1996).

The name of Krupa Satthianadhan (1862–1894) is not quite unknown to those interested in Indian Writing in English, because her two books—*Kamala* (1894) and *Saguna* (1895) are listed in all the literary histories of the subject, but copies of the novels were difficult to trace, hence hardly any critic could undertake a detailed study of the texts.

Many years ago while doing my doctoral dissertation on Indian Novels in English I abandoned the search for these early texts to focus on a later period because the libraries I then had access to did not have them. I must confess, the drab documentary subtitles of Satthianadhan's novels—*Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* and *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* did not encourage me to actively continue the search for these books in subsequent years. My interest in Krupa Satthianadhan was rekindled after reading an extract from *Saguna* in the first volume of *Women Writing in India* (1990) by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita (for some reason they spell the author's name slightly differently—without the 'h's). The witty and ironic chapter they selected brought the author alive, but did not quite prepare me for the intensity, range and fascinating contradictions of her two novels which took me by surprise when I finally got to read them a couple of years ago from copies made at the British Museum Library.

The present edition of *Saguna* comes under the 'Classic Reissue' imprint, a new series from O.U.P. which hopefully will also bring out the other novel by Satthianadhan so that a total assessment of the author can be made. The editor Chandani Lokugé, a Sri Lankan research scholar now working in Australia, has changed the subtitle of the novel to suit the taste of our times, highlighting the woman's autobiography rather than the Christianity angle. The editing is done meticulously. The text is preceded by a brief biography of the author, a chronology of the events of her life and a 16-page Introduction, and followed by Explanatory Notes and a Bibliography—satisfying the expectations of a well-edited text so completely, that occasional lapses (e.g., 'Narayana' explained as 'God Siva' in note 39, *Gitagovinda* described as 'pastoral drama' in note 51, Maharashtra spelt consistently as Maharashtra etc.) seem surprising. Also, at a time when almost all contemporary Indian writers in English have done away with glossaries, the editor's zeal for annotating common words like sari, brahmin, Vedas, mem sahib, salaam, Rama or Krishna strikes one as a bit excessive. She recounts the story of *Ramayana* ("the first national epic of India, the *Ramayana* is unique in the cultural history of the Deccan") finding it necessary to invoke the authority of Sudhir Kakar to tell the reader that Sita embodies the ideal of wifehood in Hindu culture.

In the original edition, published in the eighteen nineties by Srinivasa Varadachari in Madras, both the novels Kamala and Saguna were preceded by lengthy Forewords, Prefaces and Introductions by various Englishwomen—Mrs. Grigg, Mrs. Benson etc.—whoever they be (possibly wives of the District Collector and the Director Public Instructions)—who certified to the fine quality of Satthianadhan's English and praised the way "she has interpreted her countrywomen to us as no writer has done before." Extracts of reviews of the following variety were generously appended to the texts: "As we read, we fancy it is some English lady who has written the book, so charming it is to us." (*Malabar and Travancore Spectator*). The physical getup of the two volumes—the text sandwiched between the hagiography of the pious author, informing us *who* she is, and the reviews telling us *how* to read her novels, indicate a process of appropriation that needed to be countered, and which Chandani Lokugé has attempted to do in her Introduction by bringing in the contexts of Colonialism, Feminism and Nationalism.

The patronizing verbiage that framed the earlier edition—of the colonial as well as the missionary variety—(one praising her skill in the English language, and the other extolling her faith in Christianity) obscured the fact that these two novels were perhaps the first two female *Bildungsroman* written in our subcontinent, recording the joys, sorrows, doubts, introspections of two growing girls. Saguna like Krupabai was the thirteenth child of Brahmin parents who were converted to Christianity before her birth.

Like the author, she too grew up near Nasik nourished by the rugged landscape and craggy hills where the river Godavari originates. She was attached to books and despite varying degrees of ridicule for what was considered an unnatural inclination for a girl, managed eventually to receive formal schooling and even get admission in a medical college in Madras, as did the author. Her frail health prevented her from completing her studies, but she married a man who would share her life on an equal basis. The novel

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ends here, but the author lived on for fifteen more years, travelling with her husband wherever his job took him—Rajahmundry, Kumbakonam, Ootacamund and Madras. All through this time she regularly wrote for different journals and completed two novels before she died at Coonoor at the age of thirty-two.

The novel contains a long flashback about her parents' conversion to Christianity which would be of interest to readers today—presenting as it does the subjectivity of the father who chose Christianity out of a spirit of metaphysical inquiry, and the unwilling mother on whom it was imposed. The only other description I have come across of a similar predicament for a woman is in Lakshmibai Tilak's Marathi autobiography *Smruti Chitre* (partially translated into English as *I Follow Later*.) Virtually kidnapped by her recently converted husband who was ostracized by the Brahmin community, Saguna's mother Radhabai at first found the new way of life intolerable, but was constrained to stay with him because the court had decreed so. "She was rebellious and uncontrollable for a long time. She had her idols, kept her fasts and festivals and gave her husband food outside the house." But eventually, like Lakshmibai Tilak, Radhabai came around to her husband's way of thinking, and set up a Christian household.

There is an implicit debate in *Saguna* about the relationship between Christianity and Indian nationalism. When Saguna's father Harichandra wanted to become a Christian, the arguments put forward to dissuade him were not all religious in nature. "One objection to the religion of Christ was that it was foreign, the religion of the conquerors, therefore it was very unpatriotic for an orthodox Hindu to exchange it for his own faith." Harichandra of course was proof against this argument: "Patriotism that sacrificed truth to blind sentiments was, he said, no true patriotism."

Indeed there is no one more patriotic in the novel than the good Christian Saguna who upbraids a fashionable foreign-returned young man for talking about England as 'home', and finds it absurd that her friend, a girl who has read too many English novels should confuse her Indian reality with the England of fiction. This girl who referred to her parents as 'pa' and 'ma' to impress Saguna, "explained with an air of importance for my benefit" how young ladies wearing "long trains" and not short skirts "are taken into society". To this, Saguna's wry comment is:

> "Like many a novel-reading girl, she lived in a world of her own making and enjoyed it. She knew that the native Christian community was very small, and that there was no society to speak of, neither short skirts nor long skirts. Her mother wore a sari."

The editor Lokugé is very keen to read *Saguna* as the pioneering text in what she calls the Indian 'New Woman Novel Tradition' in English. It seems a partial way of reading the book apart from the fact that in order to talk about a tradition one has to take into consideration more than one writer. It would be difficult to name even one other Indian English woman writer in the next half-century who would qualify to belong to this category. There were writers who did seek "greater equality between men and women", and some were Krupabai's contemporaries and predecessors (Swarnakumari Debi for example or Pandita Ramabai Saraswati) but they wrote in the Indian languages, and fall outside Chandani Lokuge's area of interest. What makes Satthianadhan's novel fascinating to us in India today is not the 'New Woman' quality that would make it comparable to the late Victorian British women's fiction, but the author's ambivalence towards colonial modernity and pre-colonial heritage, her faith in Christianity with its message of equality and love and impatience with its actual practice riddled with inequality and unstated racism.

The editor's 'Eng. Lit' approach emphasizes the influence of the British romantic poets on Krupabai rather than situate her in the contemporary Indian contexts of social reform, religious rethinking and consolidation of a newly evolved genre called the novel. Through mandatory references to post-colonialism (of the Australian variety, where Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin insist that post-colonialism begins with the advent of colonialism), Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and Abdul Jan Mohammad's 'Manichean Allegory' Chandani Lokugé attempts bravely to re-instate a forgotten Indian writer in the global academic arena by using the currently acceptable idiom of critical discourse. We are grateful to the editor for resurrecting a virtually lost text, which, now that it is available, will become open to other readings as well. One hopes that there will be a paperback edition soon, because at the present price of Rs. 2.30 per page, there is little chance of the book being prescribed for university courses on Indian Writing in English—which could be a potentially large market.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, former Professor of literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi is currently Fellow, K.K. Birla Foundation and lives in Hyderabad.

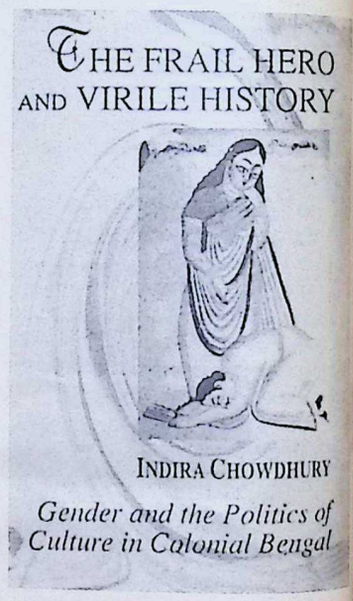
Identity, Icons and Constructions of the Self

Malavika Karlekar

THE FRAIL HERO AND VIRILE HISTORY: GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE IN COLONIAL BENGAL

By Indira Chowdhury

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 193, Rs. 395.00



An encounter between intellects and institutions is rarely one-sided and the outcome is often a re-thinking on identities, values and ways of life. As the colonial presence led to considerable collective introspection among the educated upper caste middle classes not only on roles and relationships but also on how the other perceived them. Identity, icons and constructions of the self continue to be a major preoccupation of students of the colonial period.

Those directly affected by colonial rule and its stereotypes were a small per cent of the population; at the same time, in one way or another, urbanization, the development of Calcutta, changing land relations, new jobs and western education affected a larger urban as well as rural population. By and large, it was the upper caste Bengali Hindu male who was much more in direct contact with the East India Company, and later the Empire, their distinctive administrative and logistic manoeuvres and way of life than the lower castes. Growth of professions, city-based occupations and changes in land ownership patterns were a result of the dynamic interaction between imperial interventions and the individual urge to reach out for emerging opportunities; in addition, the new system of education provided much of the intellectual basis for the development of a certain way of looking at the world. By the early decades of the nineteenth century the female body and feminine sexuality increasingly became the site for a mode of regulation, often backed by legislative provisions, the ideal being monogamous marriage with a girl old enough to consent. The frail hero was nurtured in a *weltanschauung* of intellectual and social change.

In her well-argued book, Indira Chowdhury sets out to look at some of these "multiple icons of identity" which evolved around the dominant stereotype of the effeminate Bengali: hence her provocative title which interrogates the notion of frailty by juxtaposing other identities.

Towards the end of the century, nationalism preoccupied an elite which had self-consciously been involved in social reform, and particularly measures to improve the status of its women and thus indirectly influence self-images as well as colonial perceptions of a subject people as reactionary and weak. In choosing to focus on "the dominant typologies of self-construction and their continual reorganization within the nationalist discourse of nineteenth-century Bengal", Chowdhury draws attention to the need to fracture the bounds of a single dominant myth. In the process of icon-making, masculinity and femininity naturally become dominant motifs; the heroic woman

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Whether it is through the writings of the prolific Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chunder Dutt's recovery of Shivaji and Prithviraj Chauhan or a re-telling of Sabitri's fortitude and determination, the literate Bengali, argues Chowdhury, was steadfastly committed to a countering of the frail hero myth. Icons of the motherland and motherhood became very important, albeit in rather unusual ways.

often acts as a foil to the frail hero, the nation is Bharat Mata and as resistance to sati, child marriage and polygamy grow, gender establishes itself firmly in public discourse. Using indigenous fora such as the Hindu Mela and the re-writing of legends and tales of valour, the past and tradition are invoked as an insurance against the oppressive present. The Hindu Mela which was started by the family of Rabindranath Tagore had a section on physical education and indigenous wrestling, and in 1879, Pandita Ramabai lectured on the need for religious instruction for Hindu girls while drawing attention to the freedom of the Aryan woman.

Whether it is through the writings of the prolific Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chunder Dutt's recovery of Shivaji and Prithviraj Chauhan or a re-telling of Sabitri's fortitude and determination, the literate Bengali, argues Chowdhury, was steadfastly committed to a countering of the frail hero myth. Icons of the motherland and motherhood became very important, albeit in rather unusual ways. In an interesting analysis of the Bengali response to Queen Victoria, Chowdhury argues that in looking for the exemplary mother-image, "Victoria was . . . transformed into a close kin of the nineteenth-century Bengali bhadramahila" whose education and demeanour were of great concern to the reformers. At the same time one misses a critique of the many hagiographic accounts of the Queen Empress: surely the response to her represented in part the paradoxes of the colonized mind in conflict.

That "European obsession with physicality that had diagnosed the men of Bengal as effeminate" (p. 113) was countered most effectively through the enlightened *sannyasi*—exemplified by Swami Vivekananda—is dealt with by Chowdhury at length. The moral and the physical meet in the figure of the man whose eloquent propagation of ascetic masculinity was matched by his sartorial elegance and personal style. Viewing dominance of the colonial rulers primarily in terms of their military prowess, Vivekananda invokes the spiritual power of the colonized, based on the principles of conservation, preservation and accumulation. For the *karma yogi* in the colonial context, action was liberation in a metaphysical sense. Soon enough, however, the challenge came in the form of the partition of Bengal viewed as an assault on what Chowdhury calls "bhadralok masculinity" as the lessons of asceticism and Vivekananda's redesigned masculinity had to be assimilated and mastered by the sons in order to free their motherland" (p. 156). The Swadeshi movement stressed the non-attachment to worldly ties and a form of womanhood which stressed sacrifice for the Motherland—a theme to be picked up in the years to come by the Gandhian movement.

Indira Chowdhury concludes with a rather too brief discussion of the interplay between masculinity and femininity and the construction of feminine ideals where women's experience was ignored, objectified in stereotypes, foils to the frail hero: "Women were thus constructed as embodying ideals to be emulated rather than 'equal' participants who fashioned their own identities" (p. 160). In large part the author is right in stressing that women's agency in the public sphere was largely absent; at the same time, the world view of the *bhadralok* and its search for a new paradigm had its material basis in changes in existing land relations, the emergence of the market and of urban spaces as well as the spread of education and literacy. Such changes in material existence could only be sustained by a family structure and network of relationships oriented to the newly emergent construct of public spaces. The urban, nuclear family evolved with the office-going husband, the wife who now had to combine new roles with that of the traditional *grihini* (housewife), the school-going son and servants who were employed for a wage rather than retained as a part of the *jajmani* (patron-client) relations of the *zamindari* system. Thus, while models of "idolized feminism" were useful ballasts in the undeclared war of contending stereotypes, it is not as though the newly-educated women—the *bhadramahilas*—were caught in a time warp of mythico-religious role models: after all, Sarala Debi Chaudhurani who organized *akharas*, Kadambini Ganguly who became one of the two first women doctors of the British Empire in 1886, Rassundari Debi, Keshub Chunder Sen's mother Sharadasundari Debi and many others were early critics of a confining femininity. Chowdhury writes of Sarala Debi's role—though almost in passing; women may not have been participants in the arena of public discourse, but a number questioned their stereotypification through discussions and arguments in newspapers, journal columns as well autobiographies. Changing domestic arrangements, the emergent nuclear family and spread of women's education and literacy empowered an elite cohort of women to engage in a questioning of stereotypes created by both the colonizers as well as their own menfolk. As the frail hero, the effeminate Bengali as well as the heroic woman were in turn going through a re-definition of roles within the home. Indira Chowdhury's informed account of public articulations would have benefited from a brief discussion of the private realm where reigning patriarchal discourses were being interrogated by women and the younger generation. For the *bhadramahila* too was an icon used in defence against those who saw the frail hero ossified in an obscurantist past, and not as a part of a virile history and a changing present.

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Malavika Karlekar is editor, Indian Journal of Gender Studies, *Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi.*

Erasing Silences

Malini Sood

SECLUDED SCHOLARS: WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND MUSLIM SOCIAL REFORM IN COLONIAL INDIA

By Gail Minault

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, Index, bibliography, pp. 359, Rs. 575.00

When Minault first set out to study the history of women's education among Indian Muslims, she met with a degree of incredulity for undertaking such an apparently quixotic project. "Oh, really, was there any?" a British friend asked. But a second, more fundamental, stumbling block to the study of women's education and social reform among Indian Muslims was the conventional historiography which regarded social reform in colonial India as an almost exclusively Hindu endeavour. A third problem was the removal from historical scrutiny both literally as well as figuratively of the Muslim women, not just behind the purdah, but also in the historical record. "If there is such a thing as a comparative degree of invisibility, Muslim women are even more invisible to history than are other Indian women," observes Minault (p.2).

In her introduction, "Portraying Invisibility: Strategies, Sources, Generations," Minault discusses four narrative strategies to study the problem of the invisibility of women in the historical record in general, and the erasure and silencing of Muslim women in South Asian history, in particular.

The first strategy involves studying women as an issue in the colonial encounter of cultures in 19th century India. Minault rightly emphasizes the fact that the Muslims in India have never been a monolithic, undifferentiated

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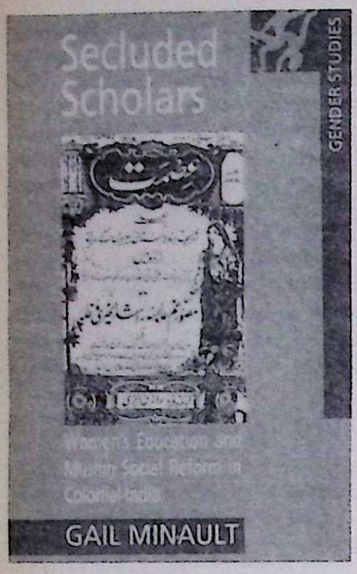

community, nor did they exhibit uniform responses to the imposition of British rule. She also criticizes the popular model of colonial encounter that posits "Western impact and Indian response" in matters of social and cultural change whereby western culture is regarded as the agent of change and Indian tradition is regarded as the inert matter which is acted upon. In emphasizing the importance of the historical continuities between pre- and post-British Indian societies, Minault describes the colonial encounter as an interactive process of "negotiation, translation and naturalization" between the colonial and the indigenous which then resulted in change in the social and cultural as well as in the political realms (p. 4).

The second discursive strategy involves studying women as the symbols of male reformers' attitudes and ambitions, the repository of their hopes and fears. For male reformers, both Muslim and Hindu, the women became symbolic of all that was backward and weak in their respective cultures, religions and societies, as well as all that was worth preserving. This strategy serves the useful purpose of relating changes in the public, 'outer' sphere to changes in the private, domestic or 'inner' sphere. As Partha Chatterjee points out in the context of the Bengali *bhadralok*, the 'private' domain of religious and social reform became a 'public' domain of contestation among reformers well before the overtly public domain of politics was open to Indian men.

As the elite Muslim *ashraf* (singular *sharif*) families, which had constituted the erstwhile Mughal service gentry, grappled with the loss of political power after 1857 and faced increasing economic and social competition during this period of rapid change, the Muslim women came to personify the plight of the community at large. The debate over women's education necessarily impinged on the larger issues of social reform and the definition of community boundaries, both for Hindus and Muslims. In discussing in print the meaning of an Indian Muslim identity in north India in the second half of the 19th century, the male Muslim reformers articulated their concerns regarding the preservation or revival of Muslim culture, as well as with the need to transform it to meet the demands of modernity. In the process, they established certain parameters of normative behaviour for their community, including those for their women.

The third narrative strategy involves studying women as the objects of men's reformist impulses and as the beneficiaries of the men's 'civilizing' activities: as students in schools; as readers of 'improving', didactic, prescriptive literature; as subscribers to magazines designed to disseminate new knowledge. This strategy yields the largest number of primary sources for historical research, thanks to the rapid expansion of the print media in this period. The articulate, educated men who led the movement for Muslim women's education left behind a rich corpus of written material which provide valuable insights into both the process of cultural continuity and the colonial encounter with the West.

However, Minault notes that these three narrative strategies offer only partial views of Muslim women, as seen through the eyes and in the writings of male reformers as either an issue, or a symbol, or an object. A fourth strategy is needed to balance this passive and somewhat abstract figure of the Muslim female. To overcome the usual stumbling block posed by the paucity or the absence of written records regarding Muslim women, Minault has read creatively between the lines of men's accounts, examined women's oral accounts using techniques derived from cultural anthropology, and analyzed women's writings when these began to appear in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in a growing number of Urdu magazines for women. Magazines proved to be the richest source of historical inquiry, while biographical and autobiographical writings, short stories, and novels by women were equally useful.

Minault divides the history of Muslim women's education and social reform in colonial India into the history of three generations. The first generation were the men born before 1857, educated in the Islamic religious and literary traditions in Arabic, Persian and Urdu (but not yet in English). These men delineated the emerging Muslim men's image of the ideal Muslim woman, discussed Muslim family life, customs and rituals, and propagated educational curricula and pedagogical principles most suitable for the women in purdah. This older generation of male reformers included Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi (1833–1912) and Khwaja Altaf Hussain Hali (1837–1914).

Both Sir Sayyid and Nazir Ahmad regarded the *zenana* (women's quarters) as a place of isolation, backwardness, corrupt customs, superstition, and ignorance. On the other hand, both men also regarded an educated Muslim woman as a potential source of ethical guidance, discipline, and revitalized faith for her whole family. They did not regard purdah as a barrier to women's learning since, as Sir Sayyid argued citing the example of his beloved mother, the world could be brought into the *zenana* via education; the educated women could then exercise a wholesome influence on their families, particularly on their sons.

We have two notable examples of this didactic, 'improving' literature for women. The first is Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi's first novel *Mirat ul-'Arus* (The Bride's Mirror) which became a huge success when it appeared in 1869. Nazir Ahmad wrote his cautionary tale for his daughters when he discovered a lack of suitable literature for the moral instruction of women, a reason frequently cited by reformers for taking up the pen. He employed a narrative plot which was widely imitated by later male writers of women's literature: the contrast between the good, educated woman and the bad, illiterate woman, here two sisters, Akbari and Asghari, from a respectable Delhi family. Akbari, the elder, is uneducated, lazy, quarrelsome, superstitious, and credulous. Asghari, the younger, is the ideal modern Muslim woman: home-educated, purdah-observing, wise, responsible, tactful, loyal, charitable, pious, and economically resourceful. She never transgresses the rules of purdah, yet skillfully manages the affairs of both her family and the outside world.

Another notable fictional representation of the Muslim female ideal was Zubaida Khatun, the heroine of Hali's work, *Majalis un-Nissa* (Assemblies of Women). The education of Zubaida Khatun was designed to overcome the lack of decorum and self control of the zenana women:

> When several women get together, they sit around and start complaining. Some complain about their mothers-in-law, others complain about their sisters-in-law. Some pour vitriol on their daughters-in-law; others recall their grievances against their husbands. Some find fault with X's marriage or joke about the amount of Y's dowry or cast aspersions on Z's ancestry. If anyone disagrees with anything another says, they quarrel. . . Such women abuse and wound each other. They say tasteless things to their husbands. They curse their children for no reason. They grumble and argue with their servants. . . (p. 45)

The educated Muslim lady would disregard the superstitions and folk beliefs so popular among the uneducated, credulous women:

> If two pieces of metal strike together, it is inauspicious. . . If you stand a cot up against the wall with its legs facing out, it will bring bad luck. . . If a broom touches your body, you will become greedy for food. . . Whenever you give children milk, curd or rice (white things) to eat, give them a slight taste of ashes as well, or the evil eye will affect them. . . If the veil of a woman whose child has died touches someone, her child will become ill, unless she cuts off the corner of the veil and burns it. If you go to someone's house for a visit, don't return on the third day. Don't go visiting on a Wednesday. . . the third, thirteenth, and twenty-third and the eighth, eighteenth, and twenty-eighth are unlucky, so don't take up new tasks on those dates (p. 47).

Both *Mirat ul-'Arus* and *Majalis un-Nissa* (1874) gained official recognition from the government, winning cash prizes and being adopted as textbooks in girls' schools. It is interesting to note that *Majalis* represents the congruence of mid-Victorian notions of social propriety and the *adab* code of ethical behaviour so beloved of *sharif* society and reformist Islam. Both ideologies advocated emotional restraint, verbal etiquette, proper deportment, and education both practical and literary. (Queen Victoria was frequently upheld as a model wife, mother, and ruler by the Muslim writers). This is not altogether surprising considering that both societies were undergoing similar processes of embourgeoisment, notes Minault.

The second generation was the post-1857 "generation of reform," the ideologues, publicists, pedagogues and activists whose education was a mixture of Islamic and western elements. They became skilled religious and social polemicists, founded associations and

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schools for the education of women, and published didactic literature and women's magazines for the edification of women in purdah during the period 1890s and 1910s.

Among the outstanding men of the "generation of reform" were Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi (1864–1943), a product of the Deoband madrasa, author of the incredibly popular *Bihishti Zewar* (The Ornaments of Paradise 1905). A veritable encyclopedia of the religious life and educational curriculum, a copy of which became part of every bride's dowry, designed to equip her to face any situation in her new life as a wife, mother, and household manager.

Other notable individuals of the "generation of reform" were Sayyid Mumtaz Ali (1860–1935) of Lahore and his wife Muhammadi Begam; Shaikh Abdullah of Aligarh and his wife Wahid Jahan Begam; Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi (1846–1918); Basiruddin Ahmad (1868–1927), son of Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi; and Rashidul Khairi of Delhi, nephew of Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi.

The issue of Muslim women's educational reform drew widely on both secular and religious positions, tradition and innovation. On the one hand, the reform programme drew equally upon Islamic intellectual traditions, such as the Sufi discourse on moral decline and renewal taught by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah, the teachings of the Deoband madrasa, as well as the *sharif* critique of the decadent nawabi lifestyle. The reformers also employed Muslim patterns of religious controversy (*munazara*), and traditional networks of relationship and patronage. The leading Muslim families formed networks of patronage involving both private donations and largesse from such princely houses as Bhopal, Hyderabad and Rampur.

On the other hand, even the most conservative did not hesitate to adopt western organizational forms and modern printing technology; these included schools as corporate entities, *anjumans* (associations) to advance social and educational goals, polemical tracts and pamphlets, scholarly journals and newspapers. Similarly, the production of a 'suitable' literature for the uplift of women, such as didactic novels, short stories, verse, compendia and women's magazines containing useful information on such topics as household management, child care and nutrition, also drew on a mixture of western and traditional literary forms such as the Arabo-Persian *dastan*). From the West came the novel of manners, the "angel in the house" genre, the "Prince in the Mirror" genre, and mid-Victorian pedagogical self-help maxims along the lines of Samuel Smiles' adages (that the home was the most influential source of civilization, that a good mother was worth a thousand teachers). The prose innovations directed at women readers in purdah included simple, straightforward Urdu (complete with a glossary of the more unfamiliar terms) and *begamati zuban*, the earthy colloquial Urdu dialect spoken by the women of Delhi but disdained by the upper class, educated *sharif* families.

Minault focuses on the men of the middle generation or the "generation of reform" who played a pivotal role in responding to the changed patterns of patronage and employment under British rule, in defining Muslim society and culture in the context of late 19th and early 20th century India, and in delineating norms and roles for women in the emerging Indian Muslim middle class. In this "work of collective biography," Minault skillfully weaves in the ideas, motivations and reformist impulses of certain Muslim men while discussing the influence of their family background, education, religious faith, kin networks, and marriages. Her primary focus is on the Urdu-speaking Muslims of North India, as well as on regional developments in Hyderabad, Bombay, Bhopal and Calcutta. The pioneers in women's education, such as the Abdullahs in Aligarh, Sayyid Karamat Husain in Lucknow, and Rokeya Sakhavat Husain in Calcutta, founded schools. Minault notes that these Muslim professionals, philanthropists, and educators were involved in actions that were incipiently, if not overtly, political.

The traditional system of indigenous home-based learning came under increasing threat during the 19th century with the spread of English education and the declining utility of Persian learning. (Urdu emerged as a respectable language of public discourse and literary expression as part of the colonial encounter in the 1830s, when Persian was dis-established as the language of government). Private patronage, the backbone of indigenous education, for the *maulvis* (teachers), *ustads* (male tutor), and *ustanis* (female teacher), who were frequently old family retainers, also declined. Another form of patronage, the *awqaf* (singular: *waqf*) or Islamic charitable endowments came under increasing state scrutiny as the British government regarded them as tantamount to tax evasion.

Muslim women's home-based education was confined to the elite *ashraf* families. The curriculum was limited to the memorization of a few Quranic passages, some basic Arabic, Persian and Urdu. If reading was an unusual skill among *sharif* women of the 19th century, then writing was very rare indeed. For these future wives and mothers, the primary focus of instruction remained the mastery of household chores and domestic duties. Conventional wisdom regarded the issue of women's education as both superfluous and dangerous. Ironically, this system declined during the 19th century, threatened by the declining supply of *ustanis*, just at the time when the demand for the services of these female tutors was increasing. As the idea of companionate marriage found increasing acceptance towards the end of the century, the modern, educated Muslim man desired a literate wife for himself and an enlightened mother for his children.

This need for educated wives and mothers for *sharif* families was fulfilled by the third generation, "the daughters of reform" who emerged in the early twentieth century. The early movement for Muslim women's education culminated in the late 1930s when a number of girls' schools founded earlier became degree colleges. The educated women of the urban, professional Muslim middle class represented the first generation of Muslim women authors and educators who were educated in schools, not at home. They were active professionally, in teaching, medicine, educational and social work; they contributed to women's magazines, wrote novels and stories based on their own lives; they founded associations and schools to spread education among Muslim women; they participated in the nationalist movement.

The activism of the "daughters of reform" is notable in three areas: the decision to leave purdah, usually a familial rather than an individual choice; the debates about purdah and polygamy in Muslim women's organizations such as the Anjuman-i-Khavatin-i-Islam; and the reform of personal law and the demand for greater legal rights for Muslim women. Among their ranks are Bint Nazrul Baqar (mother of the poet Qurratulain Hyder), Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz (1896–1979), Masuma Begam (1902–1990), Rashid Jahan (1905–1952), Ismat Chugtai (1915–1991), and Begam Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramulla (b. 1915).

The decision to abandon *purdarh* was often motivated by a combination of paternalism, the social demands of western etiquette, and nationalistic fervour. Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz, her mother and sister all left *purdah* in the 1920s at the insistence of her father, Mian Muhammad Shafi, when he became Education Member in the Viceroy's cabinet:

> (In Calcutta) Father asked us to discard the veil and we went out to the New Market without 'burqas' for the first time in our lives... Shafi was used to spending his life with his women-folk, and he did not like the idea of attending and arranging mixed functions without his wife and daughters. Moreover, he had been carefully watching the progress of Hindu women and had felt for some time that Muslim women must give up 'purdah' and take their place in the building of the nation (p. 271).

The "secluded scholars" among Muslim women are no longer invisible to historical scrutiny. Minault's sensitive and engaging social history has brought to light the hitherto little known world of ordinary Muslim women, both within and outside purdah, who often struggled against great odds to acquire knowledge, and the men who aided and abetted their search. This book is an important contribution to the study of women's history, gender relations, Islamic studies and the cultural history of the colonial period.

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Domesticating Ethnicity

Susan Visvanathan

THE CIVILITY OF INDIFFERENCE

By F.G. Bailey

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, Rs. 445.00

CITIZENSHIP, NATIONALITY AND ETHNICITY

By T.K. Oommen

Polity Press, 1997, pp. 270, price not stated.

ETHNICITY, SECURITY AND SEPARATISM IN INDIA

By Maya Chadha

Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 286, Rs. 475.00

The problem of ethnicity and nationalism is one of the most pressing problems of our time. this review I will consider the various manifestations of this concept as it appears in the writings of three social scientists, F.G. Bailey, T.K. Oommen and Maya Chadha. F.G. Bailey's work is very complex, very abstract and very cynical. When scholars of the fifties and sixties become emeritus, they seem to be able to produce pieces of writing which are immediately published because of their reputation, and the slant toward brilliance that still runs in the work, and a lifetime of insights that are fearless and confident. Their narrative also turns mildly biographical and nostalgic.

Underlying all this easy raconteur style however is a deadening conservatism, and an ideological underpinning which made caste analyses for more than four decades a tryst with hierarchy, consensus and "freedom from conflict".

Bisipara, studied by Bailey in the late fifties appears again, pinned down like a frayed butterfly wing. The main axes of the book centres around the complex world of the Kond (dominant tribals) distillers and the untouchable Panos. The questions posed are how they lived, interacted and negotiated difference, and why they did not become genocidal in the late fifties, though they might today—but Bailey doesn't know for sure since he's enjoying a sunny old age in California.

Underlying this text is the assumption that if people know their place—'the rich man in his castle, the poor man at the gate'—and live accordingly there will never be violence. Categories of race and ethnicity are used substitutively—and the idea of an Indian people is fragmentalized into the problematic conjunction of race with caste. Since this book is written like an anthropological memoir, no systematic review of the debates is ever deemed necessary. There is an interweaving of colonial pasts with present-day narratives (interestingly key narrative texts were written out for the anthropologist by the 'natives') but none of these are supported by any systematic historical analyses other than passing references. The colonial administrator sporadically mentioned, has a preoccupation with literacy, as a result a startling number of adult men are literate—'not that it was of much use to them'—according to Bailey. It is this cynical undertone which any professional sociologist or social anthropologist would find taxing. These kinds of personal forays become extremely oppressive, including the anti-Gandhian and anti-Socialist character of Bailey's narrative. He finds moral fervour misplaced—people live in a continuous round of cheating, lying, evading, negotiating and that is how power is dealt with. This in a society with scarce resources where rulers and subjects share the same limited resources. The imperialist tone of the narrative (Bailey anticipates the critic and says "Yes I am imperialist—what else can I be coming from post-war England in the 50s?") is so striking that it terrorized me. Is it taken for granted that poor natives always cheat? People survive according to Bailey because they accept that each cheats the other if given a chance.

Frankly, I think anthropologists should stop reviving 40-year old notes and retire gracefully without engaging with the 'new' dragons of ethnography such as subjectivity and narrative. As long as they were expounding structure and culture they gave us sections of reality, but now they want to write "truth" and what it says about themselves is frightening—colonialism reappears in new and frightening forms, as Bailey spells out the idiom that the natives are liars, thieves and manipulators, that "harijan" was a "God-word" that has created social conflict in a way "untouchable" never did.

Yes, freedom has meant corruption and death, but ideologies and hope still live in many different ways and it would be useful to go back to a method that helps us to understand corruption, death, violence rather than stand at a distance and talk about the "rationality" of forms of behaviour whether it is consensus caste ideology, or genocide and fascism; or the relationship between scheduled castes and tribes in an area as problematic as Bisipara in the fifties and the nineties. To look at "ideology" as continuously contested space as Bailey does is problematic in the contexts where it is continuously lived and experienced, either as sociological method which has certain rules and limits, or as value systems such as religion, tribe, caste, race or ethnicity which certainly cannot be conflated as has often been done.

The book remains interesting, however, because of its multistrands, the old colonialist affection for distant, remote and obscure places so different from the intellectual's ivory tower of the western university town. I don't wish to denigrate this seeking of the other—but only to highlight that difference is much more complex than articulating the rationality of hierarchy and negotiation. Oscillating between the conventional power-authority studies of politics in India in the fifties and sixties and the West's inability to grasp the tensions of caste, class, history, culture, society and modernism. *The Civility of Indifference* should excite an entire new generation to enter into those spaces which Bailey has delineated—mythology, history, the national movement, kingship, Oriya, Kond, the absence of women—and give us ethnographies that helps us to understand our people, rather than a simple bifurcation of civilized and backwoods which Bailey operates with.

Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity by T.K. Oommen is a fine clear book, targeted for a student audience. The sharp lines of argument, the insights of a long teaching career will appeal to lay people, and those academics embarking on a new trajectory of research or class room discussion. Unlike F.G. Bailey's book, which has (through its indifference to the debates and the assumption that by treating caste as "race" we can handle the problem of difference, segregation and hierarchy) made the problem more complex, T.K. Oommen attempts to create sharp distinctions and boundaries showing why it is dangerous to obfuscate categories. He is concerned with the central problem of nationalism and ethnicity in a way that helps us to reformulate our objective positions on difference, identity, state, citizenship, ethnicity, class and race.

This self-conscious attempt at clarifying has its own agenda: sociology and history can after all become agents of particular political ideologies, as neo-fascist movements have shown the world over. How can we then use the tools of our trade to understand what is happening, and offer models of creative and dialogic living, which is after all the aim of every sociologist? The destruction of societies, of communities, the homogenization of sub-societies and groups will render the sociologist a bored functionary of the state or dead from lack of resources.

Oommen contests the interchangeability of terms such as citizenship, nationality and ethnicity. Further time has made the use of First, Second and the Third World very disturbing, since there have been so many shifts across the globe with regard to class situation and party formation. Add to this, the "colonial" and the muddle is complete. Colonized societies don't all belong to the Third World (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand). Colonialism itself could either be 'transplantive and replicative' where in fact the colonizer never moved out leading to the genocide of indigenous communities, or 'intrusive and oppressive' where the colonizer did leave after protracted freedom struggles.

For the author, ethnification and ethnicity are the central concepts around which the rest of the book hangs together. Through ethnification, which exaggerates the link between culture and territory "the possibility of a nation sustaining its integrity is put into jeopardy". He classifies this into several categories:

1. ethnification which transforms the original inhabitants of a territory into a minority or marginalized, such as tribals in India,
2. ethnification arising out of division of homelands such as Mizos and Nagas,

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ethnification which creates the people into "outsiders"—Muslims in Bosnia, Kashmiri Hindus,
denial of full participation to those who are descended from immigrants,
settler communities who identify with the original homeland, such as Non-resident Indians in America,
ethnification that arises from the process of homogenizing into a common people: methods such as disallowing the use of the mother tongue and prejudice against ghetto culture,
ethnification of those who are invited to work in a particular country, but do not share the rights and privileges of citizens, such as Malayalis in the Gulf and
the ethnification of communities who while accepted by their hosts, still intend to return to their own country.

How then, Oommen asks, do ethnics' become nations? Ethnification is the process by which dominant groups tend to turn some people into outsiders' regardless of time and history, the period of their residence which may run into millennia, and their assimilation. Thus 'who came first' is always a difficult and dangerous question—everyone in India, other than certain adivasis are probably 'outsiders' either from the Central Asian plains, or what is now territorially designated as Pakistan, but is commonly known as our ancient civilizational cradle. The tension between Aryans and Dravidians (which is what Bailey glibly refers to perhaps as 'race'—how did the varna system handle colour differences being the question) is always so potent that only the nation-state has been able to regulate it through its mechanism of federation. Srinivas' notion of pan-Hinduism was in its own way a secular construct—it handled the varieties of Hinduism, the alcohol, the possession and the meat sacrifices of the lower castes, and the vegetarianism and the shastras of the higher. It is only with the homogenizing principle of fundamentalist Hinduism that the ethnification of Hinduism itself takes place, and we will soon have right wing organizations taking on the onerous task of indicating what a good, true and faithful Hindu is. Once all Indians were nationalists, but now only Hindu nationalists are nationalists, and the rest are tainted by secularism or particular faiths and beliefs inimical to the 'true faith'. In the words of a Hindu nationalist "It is a matter of faith not of law". In these dangerous, lawless days Oommen uses his ability to collage masses of material to ask the student to question society through concepts. Of course, most students can't afford the book at about £ 14 but perhaps some local publisher could bring down the costs in a student edition. The book has interesting, lucid but abstract sections or trouble spots the world over where ethnicity, nationality and the state are striving to separate out, though I must say I missed an essay on Palestine, and on the Gulf states. Hopefully, Oommen will provide us a book on Malayali identity in the Gulf, since being a Syrian Christian he is bound to have many relatives working long hard years so that daughters may be provided dowries and sons an inheritance. In fact, this has been the paradox of Kerala: a long history of association with Arab countries—Kerala's sea demarcates that relationship—so that Indian people have been visited for long from 'the West' with ideas (Greek, Roman, Jew, Christian, Muslim) and gold in exchange for linen, spices and pearls. This summer when I visited my mother at Alappuzha, she carefully took out some cardamoms, cloves and pepper from the cupboard, where she keeps her valuables. "Sam got it for me in Saudi Arabia" she said proudly. I went completely hysterical with laughter. "But they (the spices) went from Malabar" I said when I could. "Yes", but they (Arabs) get the better quality, so Mathai or Shamuel always bring me some."

Similarly in Belfast last year listening to the music I found strange familiar resonances. "Didn't you know Tagore borrowed his tunes from Irish music?" my friends asked me. And in missionary records, I read that the Irish and the 'Indians' were descended from the same belt in those archaic steppes. Kai Freise records that an Indian gentleman who met his father by chance said something like "You're a German? We are both Aryans. I love Hitler." All these are people's versions of what they are and who they've been, and Oommen in the grand tradition of Durkheim and Weber is wary of the conflation of caste, race and ethnicity since these can mean such entirely different things in different territories and contexts. For those looking for original philosophical comments this book will not answer, but all those interested in seeing how collages can give new insights, a different picture or create clarity out of confusion and banalities, will find in Oommen's book, a rich and rewarding experience. T.K. Oommen wrote this book in Hungary and my question is—Did he carry all these latest works on ethnicity with him, or are social science libraries in Hungary better equipped that ours are? It seems odd that a fragmentalized and betrayed country like Hungary can afford to buy the latest books and our universities cannot.

Ethnicity, Secularism and Separatism in India attempts to bring a holistic perspective to understanding the politics of India in the eighties and nineties. It foregrounds it in the Nehru years, before the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, by locating how secularism, socialism and democracy worked. These were the grand years of nation-state building, where the colonial apparatus of unity of territory was accepted as a given. How then did the "ethnic nations" of the Sikhs, the Kashmiris, and the Tamils (the selected cases in this book) begin their struggle for autonomy? Chadda is very clear that her work will have no moral tones of pious indictment, and she does achieve this to a very great extent. Her work is in stark contrast to the book on Punjab by Joyce Pettigrew which takes a partisan position on guerilla warfare, and while providing a detailed and terrifying account of the history of torture in Punjab takes the reader into an impassioned space of pleas for secession! Most Indians wear the cloak of Indian identity quite securely inspite of fundamentalism, homogeneity, religious and linguistic difference and now the nuclear bomb which might leave neither nation, state or citizen in its aftermath. So Chadda's work comes as a relief, because here is an attempt to delineate, describe and record through secondary materials and interviews. The interpretation is not forced upon one but each reader will feel the sense of events, familiar and unforgettable crowding one out. Like T.K. Oommen's work it targets for the lay reader (the 'Common Reader' in Virginia Woolf's terms who is discerning and critical) and those who are not specialists. The political scientists in India will probably read the work and see it as a collation of excerpts from *India Today* (before it became vaguely fundamentalist and ran fascist columns). However, this sense of the past through journal, newspaper clippings and interviews with Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewerdane suddenly makes one realize that we have lived through it all and these have been dangerous exciting years. The chapters on Sri Lanka and Pakistan are particularly of interest. She shows how India's concern with maintaining the balance in the subcontinent led to Indira Gandhi's involvement, which was later taken-over by Rajiv Gandhi in a more strident way, the brutalization of the Tamils as a people (when once according to legend they were the gentlest of all!) the embarrassments of the IPKF in Sri Lanka, the involvement of Tamil ethnic and national identities across India and Sri Lanka, the internecine warfare of the Tamils themselves, the negotiations with the LTTE who cannibalized all other groups to emerge as leaders, the terrible end to Rajiv Gandhi's cosmetic surgery campaigns by his own assassination.

Ethnicity, Secularism and Separatism in India attempts to bring a holistic perspective to understanding the politics of India in the eighties and nineties. It foregrounds it in the Nehru years, before the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, by locating how secularism, socialism and democracy worked.

In the chapter on Pakistan Chadda discusses how close India and Pakistan have been to war since the 1990s over Siachin and Kashmir. She discusses with alarming foresight (but that's what good sociologists and political scientists have in common—not revelation, not prophecy, not cruel hindsight—but the awareness that time and events have logical consequences) the nuclear arms race. At the edge of wiping out the most ancient and continuously surviving and shared civilization off the map, through sheer hatred felt only by politicians and their gullible followers, one has to stop just for oneself. Finally Gandhi's way of nonviolence won us our freedom. And it could be practised only by an individual, who shared this space of restraint with others. The methodology of ahimsa was thus the fine balance between self and the other, individual and collectivity. It is renunciation and action combined. We were right not to sign the CTBT, but wrong to explode, it was wrong to pollute the earth of our desert, wrong to engage in acts of suspicion, believing that we would thus become a 'great power'. Last year a retired army officer lectured at the Nehru Museum. Perhaps he was one of the seventy who sold our country to 'blind faith' and to the hegemony of majoritarianism. He argued that we needed the bomb for external and internal security. The hawks nodded, and the dissenters felt aghast at what he said. But Professor Ravinder Kumar suddenly said something very moving, "Sir, rest assured that the people of India will always lay down their lives for their country, if ever such a moment of war were to come, as they once did in the freedom movement." But the military chief felt that push button security was all that the country deserved. Per-

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haps he felt when the politicians are corrupt, a people cannot make sacrifices?

Are we going to bear the unspoken guilt of America (hidden under chewing gum and perfume) or bear the agony of Hiroshima in the womb of India?

Oommen and Chadda's work both demand from each reader that fundamental exercise of self-reflexivity. How did we move from being a nation concerned with "relational control" and "interlocking balances" (Chadda's terms) where panchsheel and federal segmentary tensions operated to maintain equilibrium, to (1) Indira's rasputinization of politics through corrupt intermediaries, (2) Rajiv's banana boat republic with more incredibly unsuitable friends and advisers, (3) The Rogue Nation which breaks all rules to get to what has been called 'shakti'. Some have wrongly associated the bomb with shakti. Shakti is about energy, creativity, desire, fertility and awesomeness. That awesomeness is holy as Rudolf Otto would say, and in Hinduism it is about justice.

What Chadda and Oommen ask for is that we remember what human rights, citizenship and justice are, and we should ask for these, and protect what we have, and protest when it is being taken away. Martin Buber, one of the greatest proponents of dialogue once said that a nation is a people. It is like having eyes. Nationality is a disease—you are constantly aware that you have eyes. Somewhere that irritation of self-consciousness makes one arrogant, defensive, coercive, humourless. How terrible that a people with the greatest diversity should now be reduced to a state without nations. We cannot return to the steppes, or to Harappa, or to Persia or to the autochthonous earth. Cannot we live with our differences, our personal faiths, our rights as equal citizens working for freedom to believe, justice and reason? It is this acceptance of rationality, law and human rights that our Constitution has always upheld.

Can there be a conclusion to a problem as vast and multi-faceted as this one? Each generation works out its problems experientially and it is the role of the social scientist to record these shifts of measuring, to read between the lines of text, to express the contour lines of social structure. We may agree or disagree with them ideologically, but all three fulfil their tasks as interpreters of their times from whatever vantage point they hold.

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A Rawlsian Trajectory for Contemporary India

Valerian Rodrigues

SECULARISM, DEMOCRACY, JUSTICE: IMPLICATIONS OF RAWLSIAN PRINCIPLES IN INDIA

By Nalini Rajan

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 220, Rs. 295.00

Rawls looms large in the contemporary discourse of political philosophy. It has been so since *A Theory of Justice* (*TJ*) hit the stands in 1971. Rawlsian liberalism and communitarianism that shaped themselves contesting the central premises of each other, led to the reformulation of several key concepts of political philosophy such as justice, liberty, equality, rights, civil society, state, community and political obligation and the fashioning of new concepts such as overlapping consensus, belonging, identity and recognition. This engagement despite their other differences has safeguarded a normative space inspite of sweeping winds of postmodernity and deconstruction. Although Rawls himself has radically reformulated his position, primarily in his interface with the communitarians, he has continued to argue for the autonomy of reason and the self from the given good while at the same time suggesting the desirable and the feasible public domain for plural societies.

This work assumes the continued salience of Rawlsian ideas particularly as they were formulated in *TJ* and explore their implications for public policy in India. For this purpose certain key concerns haunting the public space in India are identified such as secularism, communalism, the Gandhian legacy, contending versions of democracy, positive discrimination towards the disadvantaged, federalism and panchayat raj and women's movement. They are organized around the four themes of Secularism, Democracy, Social Justice and Agency. Naturally, a great deal is expected of Rawls!

It is naive to believe today that a certain Guru, even though he may be of the stature of Rawls, has the mantra to treat an entire spectrum of problems confronting a nation like India. A claim of the kind would be a heteronomous posture methodologically which no amount of clamour of autonomy with which the book is laced can repair.

The overt concerns with messy political issues, however desirable they might be in themselves, makes the author compromise with the Rawlsian framework as the neophyte does with her former ways. While she displays little acquaintance with Gandhism and Marxism, except for stray secondary references, she is out to demolish them as adversaries. Her coupling of certain intellectual trends such as Gandhism and postmodernism is from hearsay with little evidence addressed to corroborate it. She lapses into naive descriptive accounts on several issues—on Indian Muslims, Kashmir, just to mention two—in a work loudly proclaimed as political philosophy. At the end of the book you are left with a feeling that there was little to take back home except sharing, in a general way, a political stance.

To be fair to the author there are certain themes that are cogently dealt with. The introduction reviews the Rawlsian project, addresses certain standard criticisms against it and makes a case for the Rawls of *TJ* against that of *Political Liberalism* (*PL*) although the kind of universality that the author wants to see triumph in India could be much better served through the theoretical canvass of *PL* than *TJ*. In this section a range of literature is very competently handled highlighting the desirable criteria to assess the concerns mentioned above. The exposition of the principle of autonomy and its Rawlsian revision, and its irreconcilability with secularism understood as *Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava* is lucid. From such a position the author posits the delineations of secularism much more sharply enabling her to situate herself strategically in terms of the debate on secularism in India. Further, the author displays deep insights while discussing the theme of agency. She finds Rawlsian understanding of power and gender issues inadequate and within his overall framework deploys the concept of autonomy to negotiate with them competently. On democracy and social justice the exposition remains highly fragmented and does not engage with the rich literature on these themes.

There is little reason why Gandhi and Gandhism should be made the whipping horse in the study, with so few resources to command, unless it remains unstated and directed against absent adversaries. Gandhi and Gandhism could be constructed as upholding a valorized notion of the good or a communitarian situatedness of the self against the Rawlsian 'priority of right over the good' or 'the autonomy of the self from its ends'. But the author does not undertake any one of these journeys but uncritically attributes to Gandhi a religious agenda which is not demarcated from the communal agendas.

Further the author locates an interface between Gandhian tradition and postmodernist thought. Between them the author discerns "some overlapping interests. Both ideologies endorse a kind of arbitrariness and refuse the notion of rationality and the autonomous self, in the name of exposing a radical cultural pluralism" (p. 29). Setting aside postmodernism for a while, one wonders whether Gandhian tradition endorses 'arbitrariness' and 'radical cultural pluralism' and refuses the notion of 'rationality' and 'autonomous self'. There is little evidence advanced by the author to support such ascriptions. The diatribe against Gandhi and Gandhism is continued throughout the book. Gandhi is supposed to have set the tone for communal activity by "providing legitimacy to certain kind of political activity" (p. 43); he was supposed to be "a relentless explorer of immediacy—immediate needs, immediate means, immediate ends" (p. 44); he advocated "religious ethics in political practice" (ibid); for Gandhi, "truth has to do with affirmation of faith rather than rationality" (ibid); Gandhism is an "exercise in high aesthetics" (p. 46); Gandhi's definition of rationality was "unanchored and pluralistic"; Gandhism encourages "the introduction of mysticism in political activity" and postmodernist thought by denouncing both selfhood and the institutions on which claims may be made" (p. 63); "The Gandhian practice of quasi-spiritual politics" (p. 201) etc. The author magisterially declares, "It was not just that Gandhian practices were non-feasible, but they were no longer even desirable" (p. 48).

The author makes a distinction be-

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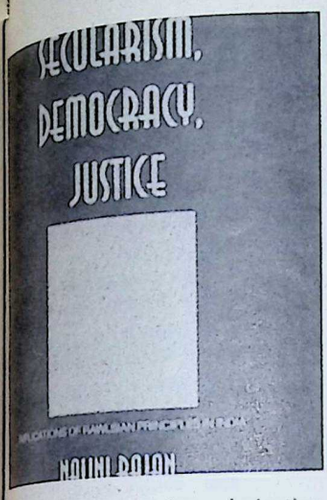

tween secularism and secularization and suggests a qualified activist role for the state in the latter sense against the centrality postulated between religion and state. While this distinction is made by others and offers immense possibilities, she does not look into the argument that secularization may strengthen an anti-secular tendency. On secularization she indicates the possibilities of drawing on the work of Nozick, Sur and so on but acknowledges little the implications it will have on Rawlsian positions of *TJ* upholding the right over the good.

In this connection it might be worth pointing out the assertion of the author that secularism as *Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava* is the constitutional position in India (See pp. 67, 73, 77, etc). The Constitution does not uphold any single meaning of secularism. Moreover, in the constituent assembly debates there are several notions of secularism at play.

The author does not succeed in upholding priority of a regime of rights over the good as she set out to argue. She, of course, launches a major attack on Rawls' *PL* and sees it as 'a compromise', 'Hobbesian tint', 'upholding pragmatism'. In the context of the discussion on uniform civil code says, "I would add that the right to revise aims and objectives will be possible for women only if they direct their demands to the state as individuals rather than as members of the same communities. Which they mean to criticise" (p. 95). However, she makes a volte-face after three pages and talks of "a double-pronged strategy". First, since we all belong "somewhere", cultural membership—as a compartment of self-esteem—must constitute one of the Rawlsian primary goods (p. 98). Culture and Community are quietly resurrected in several other instances. The author advocates the case for a wholly caste-based reservation policy for OBCs and dalits: "Any talk of eliminating the creamy layer (or the economically privileged from reservation quotas in each backward caste will only dilute the force of the reservation policy as a whole" (p. 73). What is this but caving in to unadulterated communitarian positions.

The author's passion for casting the net wide to bring issues under scrutiny leads to her making forays into Marxism and some shoddy and ill-informed statements: Gramsci is seen as the first to "delineate a cogent theory of the constitution of a nation-state" (p. 105). She says, "Much of the writing in left-wing circles has tended to focus on the economic aspects and neglected socio-economic aspects and neglected socio-cultural aspirations as 'false consciousness'" (Ibid). Such statements abound in the work.

There are obviously wrong statements in the book: "Locke's point was only the preservation of *life, liberty* and *estate* should be entrusted to the state (emphasis mine). All other rights and powers should remain with the people" (p. 112). There are others not right if not wholly wrong: "Lenin regarded nationalism as a bourgeoisie capitalist phase" (p. 106).

It is naive to believe today that a certain Guru, even though he may be of the stature of Rawls, has the mantra to treat an entire spectrum of problems confronting a nation like India. A claim of the kind would be a heteronomous posture methodologically which no amount of clamour of autonomy with which the book is laced can repair. Besides, identity and community are such marked features of the Indian ambience that any attempt to develop a public reason by ignoring or denouncing them will have little capacity to become defensible contruents.

In the process of contradicting herself the strength of the work could be easily lost. Inconsistencies overreach and judgements made on scant evidence. A strong Rawlsian kind of a case could be constructed for India which could suggest that no just and stable society can be established in India unless it is constructed on the twin principles of equal liberties and consideration to the disadvantaged. It would involve privileging of the right over appeals of the good. It would involve the necessity of rearticulating identities on the basis of the right than constantly negotiating zones of agreement based on overlapping consensus. In the process of exploring such a position the central concepts of the Rawlsian project could be made critical. Methodologically it would be tedious, if not unwieldy. But the present venture has not been able to keep its promise.

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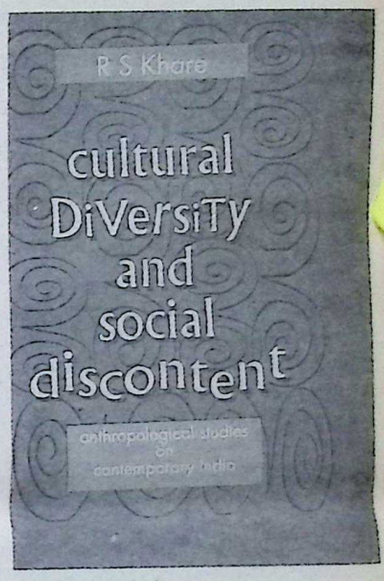
'The Aura of Discontent'

Ravindra K. Jain

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL DISCONTENT: ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES ON CONTEMPORARY INDIA

By R.S. Khare

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 282, Rs. 395.00 (cloth), Rs. 225.00 (paper)



I wish to begin writing this review at a tangent. It is my firm belief that home-grown commentators on the contemporary Indian crisis, viz., those contributing to Indian journals like *The Economic and Political Weekly, Social Scientist, Seminar*, even *Mainstream* or, for that matter, *India Today* would not have juxtaposed *cultural* diversity with *social* discontent (emphases mine) in quite the same manner as does Professor R.S. Khare of the Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia, U.S.A. For most of us cultural diversity by itself, unmediated by political and economic circumstances, would not lead to social discontent. For the author of this book, on the other hand, a long discourse on the cultural 'self' and the 'other' is enough to subsume the makings of social discontent. Ordinarily what one would have expected was that—rather than splitting hairs about fine distinctions between society and culture, self and the 'other' as meta-concepts produced, ironically, by ethnographic fieldwork *á la* the disciplinary discourse in socio-cultural anthropology—straight analytical interweaving of politico-economic and socio-historical factors would lead to a diagnosis of the crisis. Supposing, at the most, that the anthropological author in this case was insistent on being bracketed together with, as he apparently does in this book, 'crisis sociologists' like Veena Das and the 'subalternists' (pp. 47–48) he would have given cultural factors a run for their money. This is precisely what Professor Khare tries to do. In the process, however, we get referencing to an impressive array of books and journal articles produced either in the western world of learning or the West influenced Indian academia on broad themes like human rights, traumatic events like nuclear bombings, feminist approaches, Indian philosophy and philosophy in general, postmodernism, historiography et al plus an insistent resort to fieldwork data that is here presented as 'co-responsive ethnography'. The lat-

> "Located in a distinct frame of modernity, these three scholars (Dumont, Marriott and Srinivas) bring to India their own preferred modern (read 'scientific') intellectual concerns, methods and analytical perspectives. Though they studied India from 'within', only Srinivas, it seems, freely admitted those socially diverse contexts and values which mid-20th century India demanded. In comparison, Dumont preferred India to be simply ideologically opposed to modernity, while Marriott eschewed the tradition/modernity issue by focussing on India's 'paradigms' of selected classical transactional essences (or substances)."
>
> From *Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent*

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> "Exploited but vigorous and alienated but not passive, the Untouchable women today defy any simple categorization. To themselves 'three dimensional' with 'triple habits' or triple practical sense, they are at once confined yet persistent, deprived yet sensible and caring, and suppressed yet alert and practical. Although a part of the Indian society, they find themselves like no other. Upper-caste or modern educated women are no consolation to them, because they are too blinkered. Untouchable women convey this 'unique helplessness' by their strident speech, sharp gestures, and a smouldering private and public gaze, especially when wronged, hurt and suffering."
>
> From *Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent*

ter is an interesting *deus ex machina*: it means a dialogue in Hindustani with the middle-class educated and lower caste-and-class uneducated men and women in the Lucknow region reported in the pages of this book as striking phrases and metaphors basically reflecting the mental eqipoise—essentially emic expressions—of the inhabitants of a comfortable and compromised society. I am constrained to put this gloss on Khare's ethnography because the irony is that even when the author reiterates the troubled, i.e. oppressed and exploited lives of the untouchable women for instance, the evidence is not conveyed by means of case-studies but by dialogic conversations via the phrases and metaphors already referred to. The whole approach is expressive rather than instrumental, and the nagging feeling here is that one is being offered so much chaff without the grain. One moment the author gives field-expressions of discontent and the other moment those expressions are sought to be subsumed in some grand Foucauldian or Derridian meta-concepts of pain and confinement.

To see why this should be so, I wish to carry my approach 'at a tangent' a little forward. Here is a non-resident Indian intellectual, an anthropology professor in the U.S., tape-recorder in hand, collecting the overt and hidden transcripts of the cultural dilemmas facing common people in the Lucknow region. This itself is a setting of some deep mistrust; the author's locational predicament is already a problem. I have personally known a scholar much more senior and distinguished than Professor Khare, an expatriate Indian social scientist, who would not let him speak in India on the Indian campuses on the logic of 'what right and authority do you have?" Reciprocally, as someone who has researched the Indian diaspora as an Indian academic for the last thirty years, I have myself encountered a senior expatriate Indian professor refusing to pay for my book, *Indian Communities Abroad*, because according to him this was based on capital produced by them (the expatriates) and I had no business to price it to them! In these encounters the identity quandary of the expatriate Indian intellectual cannot be wished away nor, in equal measure, the cussedness of the home-grown intellectual.

Having noted all this, let us try and assess 'objectively' (if at all possible) what R.S. Khare's book has to offer us. Even at the risk of emphasizing 'stylistics' over matter, I must complain that part one of the book, 'Disciplinary Issues and Perspectives' is marred by a selective and repetitive assessment of the work of three anthropological writers on India: Dumont, Marriott and Srinivas. To use a phrase dear to Professor Khare, such individualizing of authors on Indian society is "out of sync" with the problematic of the book, viz., social discontent. One is not denying the value of critical summaries of the views of these leading anthropologists in forming a perspective on cultural diversity in India and its interpretation but where do they lead us in negotiating the causes, consequences and directions of social discontent in contemporary India? The second part of the book where the theme of 'Conflicted Self, Others, Violence and Justice' is taken up, is extremely sketchy, programmatic and indicative rather than substantive and definitive. In this part, in particular, the referencing style of the author is pronounced and obtrusive. The whole exercise on female infanticide, *sati*, communalism and the Bhopal gas tragedy seems like an effort to frame the issues in a larger perspective rather than attempts at a diagnosis and resolution of the crises themselves. The frame that we discern is global and national with only vague linkages with the local and regional settings; the prime purpose seems to be to pedagogically insert these Indian events in the contemporary world of learning and reflection about these issues in the developed West.

On the positive side once the reader takes in his stride the expressive methodology, he/she is bound to enjoy and feel encouraged by the example of a leading Indian anthropologist (R.S. Khare), a male at that—shaking loose the gendered habitus and really trying hard to come to terms with talking, sharing and empathizing with untouchable females. Here incidentally, the 'Indianness' of Professor Khare is a big asset. This reviewer has found that many a time when western anthropologists claim that the only way to get one's informants talking is with a glass of beer or whisky in hand, they are merely rationalizing their own culture-bound tastes of conviviality and free expression. Similarly, to say that a level-headed, non-flag-waving, almost traditionalist Hindustani-speaking 'babu' (p. 151) and scholar could not get close to untouchable women without having to almost 'fancy dress' as a feminist is disproved beyond doubt by Professor Khare's achievement. He has eminently succeeded in negotiating with untouchable women by essentially being what he as a multivocal, multivalent Indian whom the pluralistic Hindustani culture of Lucknow has moulded 'naturally'. Not only does the author deserve our commendation but we also feel that the undercurrent of the commonality and complementarity of gender issues in the lower-down spectrum of Indian society which Khare's ethnography subtly brings out should be taken up as a distinct Indian dimension of feminist readings cross-culturally.

There is much more in this book that is pedagogically very useful, especially its detailed and uptodate bibliography. I must end, though, on the interruption caused in reading this book by a large number of 'notes' as the addendum to each chapter. In fact, I must confess that in reading chapter 5, 'The Body, Sensoria, and Self of the Powerless: Remembering 'Re-Membering' Indian Untouchable Women', I resolved at the outset not to read the notes in my initial reading. That paid rich dividends because once I was through with the 'notes-less' reading it enabled me to deconstruct and then, 'with notes,' to reconstruct the argument.

> "But to put things in perspective, India nevertheless remains a civilization much more inclusive than all these contemporary predicaments suggest. At its heart is the vast Indian (Hindu and non-Hindu) majority that still lives by that whole range of 'multiform' reasoning that still manages through all the different pressures of cultural diversity and discord. India's vast reservoirs of myths, local pasts, and workaday yet caring social life are still shaped by such a reasoning. It still conjures up hope when injustices weigh India down. Such reasoning does not find that diversity and multiplicity just have one solution—the violent politics of counter-exclusion and annihilation of opposition. There is also that distinct way which my Lucknow informants insisted on, in which life is not for always seeing everything only in political and power terms".
>
> From *Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent*

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Reading Between the Lines of Indian Folk Culture:

Sontheimer's God and His Versions

Dilip Chitre

KING OF HUNTERS, WARRIORS AND SHEPHERDS: ESSAYS ON KHANDOBA

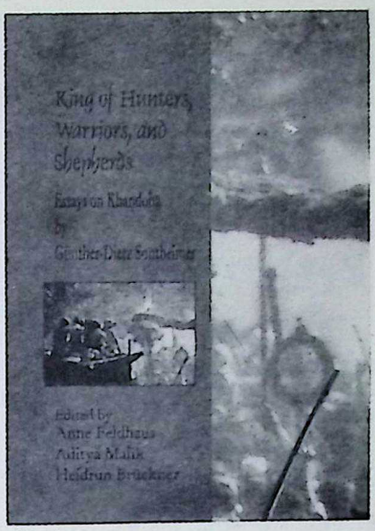
By Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer. Edited by Anne Feldhaus, Aditya Malik and Heidrun Bruckner

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 353, Rs. 600.00

When he died of the very first heart-attack he suffered, Sontheimer was only fifty-eight years old. His creativity as a thinker was about to reach a peak and he was working simultaneously on several projects with different collaborators drawn from different disciplines. I was one of them. Sontheimer had involved me in his project to translate songs about Khaṇḍoba composed and sung by the god's devotees. We had been friends since the late 1960s. The basis of our first meeting was Sontheimer's interest in Marathi and Maharashtra. But as our friendship grew, it encompassed many more common interests and personal experiences. Sontheimer had already collected songs about Khaṇḍoba from several sources with the help of his field assistants Ramdas Atkar and Rajaram Zagade, who are mentioned in many of his essays and articles including those in this book. He had even prepared rough translations of some of the songs. But as he was sensitive to the unique stylistic 'flavour' of the Marathi originals, he wanted me to work with him as a poet and a translator of poetry. We had planned to finalize our versions in the forthcoming month of Āṣāḍha. As it turned out, Sontheimer died on June 1, 1992, *Somavatī Amāvāsya*. That was the day of Khaṇḍobā's festival in Jejuri, an event Sontheimer hated to miss. The last film made together by him and Henning Stegmuller, *King Khaṇḍobā's Hunting Expedition*, was meanwhile getting ready for its premiere. Instead, the film was shown as a part of his memorial to an audience of grieving friends, colleagues, and students.

I was his house-guest for the larger part of three months in 1991-92, and visited him again in April-May 1992, just three weeks before his death. I was a witness to the frenzied overactivity, incessant smoking, and neglect of nourishment that eventually brought on the fatal heart-attack. Never before had I felt so anxious about his health. He seemed so desperate and driven, so hard-pressed and panic-stricken, so visibly in a state of disorder that I was scared. Many of the projects he had undertaken were then nearing completion or reaching a critical stage; at the same time the future of his department was under threat and he was required to respond on its behalf. Always torn between the field and the desk, between the life of a researcher in India and a Professor and academic administrator in Germany, Sontheimer had somehow coped, and rather well, too. Now, just as some of his favourite projects were exciting him and making him eager, anxieties and insecurities in his academic environment were making demands on his attention. His career was cut short just when his best was about to come.

It was his early encounter with the late D.D. Kosambi, whom Sontheimer fondly remembered as one of his 'gurus', that liberated him from the dead-ends of classical Indology. In a television interview in Marathi a couple of years before his death, he described a precise turning point in his career as a researcher. He had expressed his disbelief at a Vedic reference to twelve bullocks being simultaneously used to pull the plough. Kosambi took him to Shirur, just outside of Pune, and showed him that the Vedic description was still a current practice, and not a figment of somebody's imagination. From that point on, said Sontheimer, he looked around in the field for facts corresponding to textual or even oral-traditional descriptions. He would spend years observing the same festival, for example, to discover details he had earlier missed. The classic example is of the *Somavatī Amāvāsya* festival at Jejuri celebrated on every no-moon Monday. (The Introduction to this volume cites Stanley's 1977 interpretation of this festival and notes how Sontheimer saw it as 'essentially Brahmanical'). When



they were making the epic documentary film *King Khaṇḍobā's Hunting Expedition*, Henning Stegmüller later told me, Sontheimer showed Stegmüller his Super-8 and 16mm footage of the festival, done by himself year after year, and photographs. In a way, he had shot the whole film earlier, recalled Stegmüller. Yet Sontheimer never felt he had observed the event in its totality. Each year, he found something in it that he had not seen before. He also realized that over the three decades or so that he had been observing this festival, it had mirrored the progression of a tiny segment of history itself. For example, successive generations of informants were themselves undergoing unmistakable change. The devotees of Khaṇḍobā were not a stream running parallel to modernizing, urbanizing India. They were also becoming a part of it. Different communities of the same god's devotees had different perceptions of their deity. At the same time, coming together in his domain, as it were, they mirrored one another as well. There were no clear borders. There were many fuzzy areas. But there was no doubt that they formed one vast community worshipping a common god whose territory could be marked by certain outposts. This was an Indian model of multi-communal coherence. Sontheimer had developed an awareness of the principle of this coherence and his famous formulation of 'the five components of Hinduism' in an earlier statement of a sort of 'unified field theory' that encompasses all strata of Indian society from the tribal to the Brahmanic, including every ethnic and/or religious/communal element that has existed and interacted in the history of the subcontinent. In fact, Sontheimer would not have left out even pre-historic archaeological evidence from his comprehensive framework.

From very early on in his Indological career, Sontheimer broke new ground by focussing his attention on folk-religion. His doctoral and post-doctoral studies were very much in the orthodox domain of classical western Indology, including a serious look at Hindu law and a comprehensive exposure to the *Dharmasastras*. What could possibly be more Brahmanical than that? Folk-religion was at the other extreme. Its very sources were non-Brahminical. Instead of texts and commentaries on texts, it had oral traditions and non-literate informants. Instead of texts and commentaries on texts, it had oral traditions and non-literate informants. Instead of English,

The prototype Deccan god was eminently suitable to combine various heterogeneous tribes and social groups under his royal umbrella. This is one distinct feature of the god. The further we go to the north the more this dichotomy expressed by the two goddesses with the various social groups merges into the unity of Pārvatī. Here the second wife rather becomes an illusion, māyā, in fact the disguised Pārvatī. In the Deccan Mhāḷsā may be identified with Pārvatī, but nobody will maintain that Bānāi and Pārvatī are identical. In Paṅchmaḍhi in Madhya Pradesh we find a Śiva cult on the Cauragaḍh mountain. Here the devotees of Śiva have erected thousands of iron triśūlas for Śiva. The second wife, according to the local legends of the Korkūs, is a Korku by name Girjā. She comes from a village near Cauragaḍh. But the priest or sadhus on Cauragaḍh maintain that Girijā and Pārvatī are one. This reminds us of the story told by the 18th cent. Marathi poet Śrīdhara in his adaptation of the Kaśikhaṇḍa, in which Pārvatī in the disguise of a Bhil woman searches for the angry Śiva. Śiva falls in love with her before he recognizes the disguised Pārvatī.

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Sanskrit and the self-proclaimed 'standard' Marathi of the urbanized elites, he would have had to find his way through *'gavran'* (colloquial/vulgar/rustic) dialects restricted to the communities he studied. But this is precisely what attracted his attention and stimulated his appetite for original research and exploration. None of his caste Hindu friends in Pune, Bombay, and elsewhere in Maharashtra were even sufficiently aware of communities such as the Hatkar Dhangars whom Sontheimer researched and documented. The archival material he has left behind is an astonishing treasure of linguistic, stylistic, poetic, narrative, musical material produced by this community. Sontheimer developed his own procedures of field investigation and trained his two assistants, Atkar and Zagade, since they were teenagers schooling in Jejuri. Today, they are expert 'hunters and gatherers of information' of the kind Sontheimer collected in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and even beyond these principal areas. Sontheimer was very conscious of the boundaries between Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical India. But he also knew the points of entry from the one to the other and saw in it a pre-historic division. The two worlds had simultaneously existed side by side, like *vana* and *ksetra* (one of Sontheimer's richest insights.) Sontheimer's 'Brahmanical' informants would include a wide range of Marathi-speaking scholars and intellectuals: among them would be R.N. Dandekar, the late S.G. Tulpule, R.C. Dhere, Prabhakar Mande, and Ashok Kelkar—as a cross-sample. It needs to be emphasized that he gave equal, if not greater weightage to such 'non-Brahmanical' informants as the late Limba Torve and Sakharam Lakade who figure prominently in the essays in the volume under review. In Sontheimer's comprehensive view of Hindu culture and society, the Brahmanical is not placed hierarchically above the non-Brahmanical but functionally in relation to it and in dynamic coherence. Although I am hardly qualified to say so with any measure of authority, academic or empirical, it seems to me to be the hallmark of his new Indology, often derisively dismissed by his detractors as 'the Sontheimer school'. The editors of the present volume belong to this school. Heidrun Bruckner and Aditya Malik were students of Sontheimer at the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg. Anne Feldhaus, a product of North American university culture, has been even more prolific in terms of publications than the former. Also, she is the only active 'follower' of Sontheimer who works in Maharashtra and among Marathi speakers as Sontheimer himself did. Her publications of the last ten years show how powerfully she has been influenced by Sontheimer.

Sontheimer's bold, interdisciplinary, and holistic approach to 'Hinduism' and his emphasis on the relatively neglected 'non-Brahmanical' sources and themes provoked hostility and this antagonism was expressed in the guise of academic scepticism and rational doubt. The really irritating fact was that Sontheimer's subjects and themes were unfamiliar to most other Indologists: they were ignorant of what he was presenting. It was not accessible through any previously published literature in English or Sanskrit. Even in Marathi, the material documented and presented by Sontheimer is the outcome of his own investigations. Nothing makes people more uncomfortable than the slightest reminder of their own ignorance. What we have here is a product of pioneering research and the documented traditions are fragile and changing or even rapidly perishing. Sontheimer looks at Khaṇḍobā from a series of perspectives in a true holistic spirit—the historical, the mythical, the ritual, the folk-artistic and the theatrical, the tribal and the communal. His themes, too, are original in their very conception. For example, he compares Rudra and Khandobā as 'folk-gods' and demonstrates revealing continuities in both the deities and their cults. To do so, at the very outset he deliberately sets aside the Siva of the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. He also excludes the rituals and philosophy of various Saivite sects, for example the Pasupatas. Sontheimer's attempt here is to show that the Siva of the Sanskrit texts is not the exclusive successor of Rudra from which Khaṇḍobā eventually emerged as a "parochialized" cult or perhaps even as an "aberrant" version of a Puranic Siva. He says, "One may with much more justification say, as we shall try to show, that there was also always the folk god called "Rudra" in the Vedic texts (among other names, e.g. Sarva, Bhava, Pasupati), who lived on in cults like that of Khaṇḍobā or the related Mailara (Karnataka) and Mallanna (Andhra). These cults existed parallel to the Rudra/Siva of the Puranas and of the Saivite "sects', which had their own peculiar mythology, ritual and philosophy. The Khaṇḍobā cult was linked to the scriptural "great tradition", as we see in the *Mallari Mahatmya*, but this link was late and superficial and failed to fully "universalize" the folk god Rudra-Khaṇḍobā and his cult." Sontheimer then proceeds to show how, in the texts of the later Vedic period (the period of the *Atharvaveda*, the *Brahmanas*, and the *Srautasutras*) we find Rudra reflected as a god who had to be integrated into the *srauta* sacrificial system, but it seems obvious that he belonged primarily to the Vratyas rather than to the brahmanical sacrificial priest. The picture of Rudra as portrayed by Vedic texts shows a god on the whole unaffected by later interpretations. *That is, we get evidence of a god who has not yet been dynamically interpreted by Puranic authors, "sectarians", classical poets and philosophers."* (Emphases mine) Sontheimer then leads us to the key concept that there was not "one unilinear historical development from a single Rudra to Siva, but. . . a more complex development of several distinct parallel traditions."

It is hardly possible to comment on such a rich collection of essays on interrelated themes which cumulatively present a comprehensive statement of the significance of a single folk deity. Sontheimer pursued Khaṇḍobā since fairly early in his research career. When he died, he was working on projects that would have further unfolded not only the encyclopaedic information that he had so assiduously gathered over several years, but also his key concept of the Khaṇḍobā cult as 'a mirror of Hinduism.' Sontheimer's presentation of Hinduism and its continuities within changes was not meant in any way to be a critique of classical Indology which is exclusively burdened by Brahmanism and its biases. But Sontheimer's essays have implications beyond his immediate scholarly focus. In an India where the legacy of Brahminism has spawned the political monster of Hindu fundamentalism, a more comprehensive model of Hinduism itself that highlights its hitherto neglected non-Brahmanical folk aspects may have some sobering impact on the ideologically prejudiced.

A striking feature of these essays is how they reflect Sontheimer's unique thought process. Most of the essays present original material researched and documented by the author himself. But how he links it with texts ranging from the Vedic and the Puranic and with the findings of other Indologists is the real treat. Some of the essays offer models of observation, collation, and presentation. My special favourites are *Daṣarā at Devagudda* for its illuminating descriptive quality and *The Myth of the God and His Two Wives* for its striking presentation of oral material documented as a traditional 'text'—the

> "In the case of Khandobā we find the same mutual mirroring of bhakta and God. For the merchants he is the Merchant; for the hunters he is the Hunter; animal imitations of the devotees reflect the manifestation of the god as an animal or as his favourite animal; for the hero he is the divine Hero. This mutual intimate relationship is reflected in folk literature as well as in folk rituals. For instance, it can be observed during the Dhangar shepherds' annual festival (khel=play). This festival in honour of ancestors and gods takes place before the shepherds leave their monsoon camp for the annual migration (Sontheimer 1988: 109–30). At the end of the dance which brings ancestors and gods to life, the young Dhangar devrusi ("shaman") becomes possessed by Khaṇḍobā. He holds a spear—one of the characteristic weapons of Khaṇḍobā—, carries a heavy chain and rides on the shoulders of a friend ad if he were a horse. The young man is an accepted devrusi who has been tested to see if the god truly takes possession of him. But before this test a special relationship had been formed between him and Khaṇḍobā. The Dhangar had broken his arm in an accident and during this liminal stage he had a vision of Khaṇḍobā. This is not just a case of somebody choosing a deity as his iṣtadevatā, but the encounter was spontaneous and caused by a physically and emotionally painful experience. The individual relationship between devotee and god was later supplemented by the relationship between the Dhangar group and the god; the God became a kuladaivat after his "genuineness" and "presence" were tested by his taking possession of the Dhangar."
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> From *King of Hunters, Warriors and Shephers*

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Issues of Inclusion and Accommodation

George Mathew

PLURALISM, MINORITIES, NATIONAL INTEGRATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS
Edited by Abdulrahim P. Vijapur, Ajay Kumar Singh and Kumar Suresh
South Asian Publishers, Delhi, 1997, pp. 189, Rs. 260.00

Pluralism, minority rights, and national integration were central themes of India's freedom struggle. After Independence they assumed new dimensions within the concept of building a nation-state. In the early years of Independence the basic assumption was that people and political formations would accept pluralism as a positive factor in nation building, there would be no distinction between majority and minority and the Indian social integration would be a model for the rest of the world. After fifty years of freedom are we back to square one? Today we have a coalition government led by a political party which believes in "one country, one people, one culture". We must distinguish, however, between the 'one country' concept of the BJP and the 'one nation' theory in western democracies that takes plurality seriously. The party has front organizations which look negatively at the values of the freedom struggle and at the basic features of the Constitution. Furthermore, it set its eyes on capturing power in Delhi, politically capitalizing on communal riots which tore apart the secular fabric of this country. The Bhagalpur riots of 1989 left about 1000 dead, Aligarh riots in December 1990 left 120 dead and the post-Babri demolition riots all over India saw 1200 dead and 4,000 injured. If we compare the 1989–1993 five year period with that of 1954–63, we find that during the latter nine year period only 344 persons lost their lives in communal riots. Of course, at that time, we had a leader in Jawaharlal Nehru who said that "if any man raises his hand against another in the name of religion, I shall fight him till the last breath of my life whether I am in Government or outside".

According to the authors, when postmodernism is institutionalized on a firm constitutional basis, pluralism moves to federalism. That is precisely why 'federalists' prefers federalism to pluralism.

Since the issues of majority, minority, homogenization and mixing of religion with politics have once again come to the fore, the book under review, *Pluralism, Minorities, National Integration: Problems and Prospects*, has contemporary relevance. It is edited by three young scholars working in political sociology. Their subjects of research for several years have been problems of pluralism, rights of minorities and issues affecting national integration. The book deals with questions of inclusion and accommodation in the context of religious pluralism in India, minority rights, empowerment of the scheduled castes and above all national integration in India. It also discusses the working of the National Integration Council.

Plurality in the post-modern period constitutes the theoretical framework for a discourse on religious pluralism. "The post-modernist and post-colonial theory, philosophy and approaches have rejected the validity of the paradigm of modernity and the basic tenets of modernism. Deconstruction of modernism has been [followed] by greater emphasis on multiplicity, plurality, heterogeneity, diversity and specificity. The shifting emphasis logically boils down to the post-modernist and post-colonial concern for pluralism" (p. 4). According to the authors, when post-modernism is institutionalized on a firm constitutional basis, pluralism moves to federalism. That is precisely why 'federalists' prefer federalism to pluralism. In Daniel J. Elazar's view, "pluralism in one form or another may indeed be a safeguard of liberty, but it cannot be relied upon by itself unless properly institutionalized constitutionally; and federalism differs from pluralism because it bases its efforts to deal with the realities of human nature on firm constitutional basis" (p. 8). Following this theoretical framework religious pluralism as a constructive model of accommodation based on equality and liberty and its manifestations in India is the central point of discussion by three authors. There is a big chasm between theory and practice. While we have a Constitution which enshrines the best ideals of a modern, civilized society, another exclusivist model with "one's own community and hostility and antagonism towards the other" is fast developing. Tackling this should be everybody's concern. Unfortunately, the book has not gone beyond giving conventional academic answers.

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Developing a humanist culture transcending divisive religious and caste boundaries is one of the ways to effectively counter the problem. That can be achieved only through firm measures to establish an equitable society. An intensified struggle by the have-nots for their rights is an essential criterion. In other words, economic issues are critical for building healthy nationalism. Where poverty, inequality and feudalism persist, communal tensions prevail. The BIMARU states are the classic example of this trend. We have to bring in through discussion, debate, and writings the concepts of civil society for strengthening the state and polity in India. Unfortunately this focus has been lacking in our discourse. The civil society, independent of, but interdependent with the state has a crucial role to play in creating a situation of accommodation and toleration.

The minority communities can play a vital role of construction and creativity in a healthy civil society. The book touches upon this issue in passing. Minority rights in federal India are dealt with within the framework of human rights in this book. International human rights conventions and the Na-

Dilip Chitre, Marathi and English poet, translator, critic, artist, and film-maker, collaborated with the late Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer on translations of songs about Khandoba, yet to be published. He was a close friend of Sontheimer and is now President of the Sontheimer Cultural Association, Pune—a public trust committed to setting up a Museum of Maharashtra Folk Culture at Jejuri in memory of the late scholar.

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tional Commission for Minorities are well documented. The recent happenings in India—the turning point being the Babri Mosque incident—against minorities as well as the fundamentalists' (both Hindu and Muslim) attack on secular values, the media and minorities are well researched in the discussion. Abdulrahim P. Vijapur concludes that in spite of India's obligations, both national and international, to protect the rights of minorities its record is not satisfactory. The exceptions are its constitutional law and the judiciary. Policies and practices of the Central and State governments and actions of both majority and minority religions leave much to be desired as more often than not they are violative of the international norms and constitutional obligations. It may also be stated here that the republic in India provides an excellent field for all the players. The problem is that the players are not willing to stick to the rules of the game.

Two chapters are devoted to national integration in India. They dwell upon the history and development of the concept and the problems of national integration. R.A. Schermerhorn's famous words on integration are pertinent here. For him integration of a society or state is "a continuing process rather than a state of being, relative rather than absolute, situational rather than all-embracing, corrective rather than self-subsistent, a matter of degree rather than an all-or-none phenomenon, and correlative with conflict rather than a displacement of conflict" (*Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research*, p. 67). Therefore national integration has to be perceived as a dynamic process of harmonizing socio-cultural diversities (p. 95).

Of late there is less discussion of national integration as there is a dynamic process of social integration of people through interaction in employment nationwide, economic opportunities, spatial mobility, vibrant democracy at the Centre, state and now at the local levels. The nationhood is built up slowly but steadily. The separatist tendencies in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir were the result of people feeling alienated from the nation. Temporarily they could be tackled through force and military intervention. But the lasting solution lies in emotional integration. Even today, when we visit some parts of the country, we hear people say, 'Oh you have come from India' or 'I am going to India'. Whenever sections of the Indian society feel alienated we go backwards on the road to national integration. Here the greatest responsibility lies with those who claim to belong to the majority community. Their goodwill and willingness to accept and coexist with diversity is the key to the whole issue, not domination and imposition of the will and whims of the majority. And the only answer to this problem is more secularism, more humanism and more equity and not exaggerated identities and boundaries of separation.

There are serious problems of national integration; some of them are identified by the authors and the book presents an in-depth discussion of these problems. The question before everybody concerned with nation-building is how not to perpetuate them. And also how to tackle them with imagination and determination. Every Indian must be proud of his or her nation. For this to happen, India must address some of its basic problems, including its social, regional and sub-regional disparities. Unfortunately, the present day political leadership is going after non-priority issues like nuclearization or frivolous religious expressions. These are dangerous trends which will only accentuate the problems which the three authors through their research and theory building have set before us. This book should go beyond academic circles to generate debate on these issues which affect the life of the nation. Ignoring the signals can cost us dear. The recent history of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovokia, USSR is still fresh in our memory.

George Mathew is Director, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi.

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Home Thoughts from Abroad

H.Y. Sharada Prasad

ANANYA: A PORTRAIT OF INDIA

Edited by S.N. Sridhar and Nirmal K. Mattoo

The Association of Indians in America, New York, pp. 928, US $ 79.95

The number of books that have been brought out to mark the fiftieth anniversary of our Independence must run into dozens. *Ananya* is one of the more impressive of them. It is a publication of the Association of Indians in America. The Indian community in the United States and Canada consists of more than a million people. As an American contributor to this volume, Professor Arthur W. Helweg, puts it, "Indian immigrants are generally ranked as the ethnic community with the highest income and education in the United States. More importantly their contributions culturally, economically and politically as individuals have been substantial. As a community, they have enriched American culture, brought technological innovation, appreciably contributed to the international base of the US and increased US economic wealth. At the same time, India has also benefited economically, politically and socially from her Diaspora." They may have their little and big dissatisfactions with the slow-moving ways of the mother country, but they spring to its defence, are proud of its cultural wealth and continue to be emotionally involved with it. We here refer to them as NRIs, but as Shashi Tharoor has remarked elsewhere, the expression might well be expanded into "Never Relinquished India". This book is an act of homage on the part of these expatriate children who carry India in their hearts.

It is a big, bulky book of more than 900 pages. The editors, Professor S.N. Sridhar and Dr. Nirmal K. Mattoo, explain in an Introduction that their aim is not to present a balance sheet of the last fifty years but provide a guide to Indian civilization. To quote their own words:

"It has probably never been more important for the world to know about India than now. . . India, with it's 920 million people, is the second most populous nation on earth; the fifth largest economy; a Big Emerging market with a middle class consumer base of 200 million people; and the world's largest democracy. . . Above all India represents a grand experiment crucial to humanity's future in participatory democracy, secularism, multiculturalism, affirmative action, and ecologically viable development, to name only a few. . .

"Most of us often wished we could read, and recommend to our relations, friends, neighbours and business associates, a reliable and readable book which would be a broad introduction to India for the general reader, without being tangled in technicalities or irritating overgeneralization."

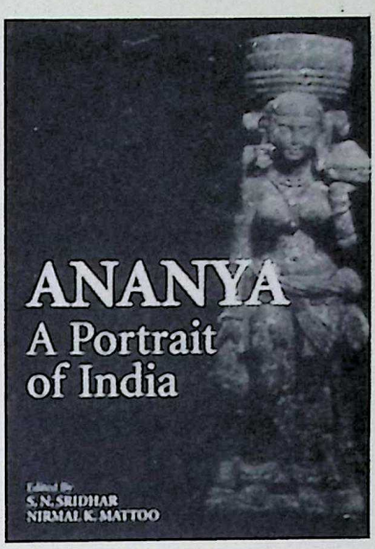
The result is *Ananya*. The word, the editors point out, means "like no other", "incomparable", "unique"; then they add as a modifier, "Every country is *ananya* in its own way. Our goal has been to convey in some measure the ways in which India is *ananya*."

The Introduction is followed by 39 essays and an epilogue. The essays are grouped under ten themes:

Historical Background; Indic Religions and Philosophy; Society and Politics; Science and Technology; Business and Economics; Arts and Architecture; Language and Literature; Performing Arts; Makers of Modern India; and Identity and Diaspora.

One would have thought that all the contributors would be eminent scholars from the Indian community in America or by old India hands in the American academic institutions or media; but nearly half have been secured from back home. The essays on the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, luminous for their quality, are both from the late Professor M. Hiriyanna written more than sixty years ago. Girish Karnad's essay on the theatre was originally written for *Daedalus* eight years ago. Anantha Murthy's essay on the novel is from a paper presented in Chicago University in 1986.

An anthology should not be judged by who wrote the pieces and when but by how good they are. A high proportion of the essays in this book pass that test. Particularly notable are Professor T.N. Srinivasan's "Indian Economy over Five Millennia", Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya's "The Colonial Impact on India", and Professor Robert L. Hargraves' "Dilemma of Democracy in India". It is not easy to sum up in thirty-five pages the country's economic experience from the days of the Harappan civilization to the economic reforms initiated by the Narsimha Rao government. But Professor Srinivasan has done it with aplomb. An interesting nugget from the essay is a quotation from Professor P.C. Mahalanobis on the pernicious impact of trade unionism on our post-Independence development effort. Imagine the guru of the Leftists saying: "In India labour laws are probably the most highly protective of labour interest in the narrowest sense in the whole world. There is practically no link between output and remuneration." The essay on trade and finance in ancient India bears the mark of Mr. Prakash Tandon's vast knowledge and elegance of style.



Professor Hargraves combines congratulation with caution. While conceding that India's democratic institutions have been remarkably successful in accommodating cultural diversity and that our federalism has managed, albeit imperfectly, to compartmentalize conflict, he warns that the ghosts of linguistic and ethnic separatism have by no means been laid. The mischief potential in Punjab, Kashmir and the North-East should not be underrated. Nor the divisive consequences of caste reservations and the dangers posed by the reinventing of a "muscular Hinduism". The task of reconciling majority and minority aspirations will remain an ever-present challenge in a country of India's ethnic and regional diversity.

The section "Makers of Modern India" deals with only Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Professor C.D. Narsimaiah has contributed very readable papers on "Gandhi and the West" and "Jawaharlal Nehru's Sense of History". In the former, he sums up the role played by three western authors, Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy, in the evolution of Gandhi's philosophy of life. The last sentence of the essay gives an idea of Professor Narsimaiah's own historical perceptiveness: "Millions of educated Indians have only been at the receiving end of western thought, while a man like Gandhi, because he could respond from the deep well of Indian wisdom, he alone could travel farther than did the millions and enrich mankind's heritage—and enrich even those from whom he received the stimulus."

It would have been useful of the section had also acquainted the readers with the life and work of some other great figures of our time who made decisive contributions to the making of India, like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Subhas Bose, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, B.R. Ambedkar and Jayaprakash Narayan.

A short epilogue has been contributed by Dr. V.S. Arunachalam, former Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister who has since migrated to the United States. He refers to the vast advances made in science and technology under the impetus of Nehru and Indira Gandhi and the problems that still baffle the country. "There is a lingering feeling among many of us", he remarks, "that technology should have served us better. The quality of life of our people should have improved further, the country should have been better off, and India should have become an attractive place to live. Strategically, the country should have been seen to be stronger without evoking doubts or concerns from others." The fault, according to him, is that we have neglected the all-important task of eradication of illiteracy. "The technology engine works efficiently only when people are better educated. A smaller number of Ph.Ds or B.E.s would not matter as (much as) a very large number of high school graduates." Arunachalam recommends to us a new Tryst with Technology based on a strategy of total literacy to take forward and complete Jawaharlal Nehru's Tryst with Destiny.

The book is elegantly printed. The typeface is attractive and the spacing liberal. Composing errors are not too many. The articles pass the test the editors had set for themselves, of being reliable and readable. But the reviewer had one difficulty—the book's bulk. It is too heavy to hold in the hand. The publishers ought to have brought it out in two volumes. We are told by the editiors that a companion volume will follow, which will be devoted to regional cultures and crafts. They should ensure that the illustrations are laid out and printed more attractively in that volume.

H.Y. Sharada Prasad is a former Information Advisor to the Prime Minister and has translated a couple of books into English.

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Interrogative Quest of the Individual Intellect

C. Uday Bhaskar

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

Edited by Rukmini Sekhar

SPIC-MACAY, 1998, pp. 182 with illustrations, Rs. 600.00

At the 50 year punctuation, the Indian glass is a typical case of being half-full and while the achievements as a unified state and consolidation attained as a nation are commendable—given the adversities that had to be overcome—the empty spectrum of the glass has predictably aroused considerable reflection across the board in the subcontinent.

August 1998 marks the end of the year long 50th anniversary focus for India and there is little doubt that it has been more of an introspective year than a celebratory one for a variety of reasons. At the 50 year punctuation, the Indian glass is a typical case of being half-full and while the achievements as a unified state and consolidation attained as a nation are commendable—given the adversities that had to be overcome—the empty spectrum of the glass has predictably aroused considerable reflection across the board in the subcontinent.

The volume under review is part of this 50th anniversary effort and is a joint-project of SPIC-MACAY, the well-known cultural organization that has rendered yeoman service in taking Indian culture, music and dance to the younger generation in their schools, colleges and universities, and FURI—the Dalai Lama inspired Foundation for Universal Responsibility. The target audience is the youth of India and seven issues have been identified for exploration—universal responsibility and nonviolence, pluralism, governance, gender, development, education and sacred India by a team of academics and professionals from different disciplines. Part of a larger project of SPIC-MACAY that involves films on these seven themes and an integrated campus outreach program, the book itself serves as a curtain-raiser of events that will unspool in the months ahead.

It is an ambitious scope and in attempting "to contextualize the celebrating of nationhood in a civilizational framework" the editor notes that this collection of fourteen essays makes "a quiet, yet determined foray into the realm of the intellect in order to fulfil the primary objective of this volume—namely to arrive at a state of reason." As Paul Brunton reminds the reader, in the final analysis, "the intellect must look for its originator" and this collection provides the catalyst for such a quest—if the individual is willing to take the first step. A collection of essays will perforce have a sense of diversity in terms of both form and content and this volume is no exception. Some of the articles/essays have appeared elsewhere before but this does not detract from the overall package that ranges from short pithy comments to a more reflective yet rigorous seventeen page essay with 31 end notes by Ashis Nandy on "Pluralism as the Politics of Cultural Diversity in India." Nandy needs little introduction to his peer group and the intelligentsia who have been following his significant body of writings—pushing the envelope of conventional thinking, as it were on a range of socio-political and cultural issues and his longish essay is the kind of stimulus that recommends this collection to the youth of India. How many times have we got heard the cliché that India is a unique case of unity in diversity and that the "secular" model is the only hope for the state to survive the vicissitudes of sectarian compulsions in the years ahead? However reality is different and the prevailing division of the average Indian according to every conceivable form of classification—religion, language, caste, ethnicity, gender et al is case in point. The rationalization is provided admirably by Nandy whom I would unhesitatingly recommend to the younger generation in India (Pakistan?) and abroad grappling with many contradictions—particularly the so-called ABCDs, the America Born Confused Desis, as one has heard the expression being used.

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One may be indulged for quoting the author in toto when he points out that: "After fifty years, it is time to admit that the country has survived this plurality not by the standard means developed and honed in the dominant political cultures of the world—creating a 'melting pot' where people leave their diversities behind and interact as individual citizens having specified rights and obligations. Despite popular slogans such as 'We are Indians first, Hindus and Muslims second', Indian politics, we know, not only depends heavily on primordial loyalties of caste and communities, but also uses these loyalties for virtually every kind of mobilization effort. The dreams with which Indian modernists have lived for the last 150 odd years have been shredded by the live dynamics of Indian politics."

Quite fortuitously Nandy in his exploration of the plural self is addressing the very audience of SPIC-MACAY—the Indian modernists with western education and upbringing who exude a sincere urge to get back to their cultural roots between the elusive quest for prosperity, dignity and identity sandwiched in MNC jobs and modern day sweat shops within the subcontinent and GRE/SAT and green cards/glass ceilings in the Diaspora. One hopes that contributions of this nature will encourage the younger mind to question conventional wisdom—especially that received as part of a dominant narrative and embark on this interrogative quest of the individual intellect—the leit-motif of the volume.

It may not be possible to identify individual authors in an eclectic collection of this nature but the central theme is one that provides considerable grist for the fertile and inquisitive mind. Thus whether it is Tanika Sarkar asking in feminine discourse, "have we moved ahead at all, or are we running around in circles, rooted to the same spot? There is no easy answer. . .", or Leela Samson on the post-reactionary phase of feminism cautioning that "History and manipulation warps or controls thinking. . . feminists tend to curl up in concentric circles, keeping out 'other' women and all men"—there are multiple strands that warrant much greater scrutiny by the reader.

Any reference to the Indian ethos—be it civilization, culture or art must necessarily invoke the "sacred" and the "spiritual" and here Kapila Vatsyayan and Makarand Paranjpe provide useful filters to review the current state-of-the-art in more ways than one. While Paranjpe's evocative essay links the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the political—drawing from Gandhi's writings and the Upanishads, Kapila Vatsyayan complements this section with characteristic panache. Reflecting on whether Indian art is sensuous or spiritual—body or soul?—she draws a distinction between facile classifications and interpretations now in vogue as for instance the popular association of the word *shringara*. It is clarified that this crucial word used so often in Indian art signifies neither "decoration nor make-up" but "the enlivening of the body with breath (*prana*) through the senses so that love at its most selfless and purest is communicated." The revival of interest in Indian dance and music is welcome but must not be anchored on misleading assumptions about the erotic or the sensuous and as Vatsyayan adds—to my mind relevantly—in the current fervour to teach the younger generation in a plethora of dance and music schools/academies scattered through the country: "Without the sense of the sacred through a disciplined celebration of life and the senses is one matter, to titillate the senses through the use of undisciplined movement is quite another. Can we pause, albeit for a moment, to reflect upon how we are desacrilizing both the body and the senses? Is this not pollution of the worst kind?"

Other authors who embellish the collection include Dilip Simeon on ahimsa, Akeel Bilgrami on minority rights in a pluralistic democracy in an essay that draws on Ambedkar, Raghava Menon on the educational predicament, S. Anandalakshmy on educating the whole person, Rajeev Bhargava and Niraja Gopal Jayal on the

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"Without the sense of the sacred through a disciplined celebration of life and the senses is one matter, to titillate the senses through the use of undisciplined movement is quite another. Can we pause, albeit for a moment, to reflect upon how we are desacrilizing both the body and the senses? Is this not pollution of the worst kind?"

democratic process, Vandana Shiva on rebuilding an earth democracy and John Kurien on development and the micro global quest. The last author who merits a final word is HH The Dalai Lama. In his short essay on "Universal Responsibility: Key to a Gentler World", the spiritual leader notes that India is the source of several great spiritual traditions and exhorts the country to take a more active role in directing the future of humanity. The current state of the nation and the many anxieties that lie embedded in a turbulent framework cause for concern and must impel serious and critical inquiry. Yet pessimism must not set in and the perception of HH who is bravely trying to salvage the concept of Tibet against terrible odds is apt: "I often tell my Indian friends that what the country needs today is a fearless, selfless spirit such as the one which inspired the independence movement. As we approach the end of the 20th century and embark on the 21st, I hope and pray that this nation and her people will set an example for the good of the world." The future of the country will to a great extent be determined by the choices made by today's younger generation and to that extent, the Dalai Lama's words are directed at the most relevant section of society and one hopes that these 'seeds' have not been sprinkled in vain. One last point of suggestion—the editing/proofing of the volume tripped up occasionally and the page setting/choice of font size tended to strain the eye—areas that should be addressed in the next effort. Said in passing while we must all be grateful to the grant from the Ford Foundation for making this volume possible, one hopes that Indian funding will sustain this commendable venture like SPIC-MACAY and FURI.

Uday Bhaskar is an art critic.

Exchanging Literatures

K. Satchidanandan

LIVING LITERATURE: A TRILINGUAL DOCUMENTATION OF INDO-GERMAN LITERARY EXCHANGE
Edited by Barbara Lotz and Vishnu Khare
Vani Prakashan, New Delhi, 1998, pp. xxii+390, Rs. 495.00

Cover: grim, uninviting—with forty-one faces in varying moods, from the melancholic and the meditative to the exuberant and baffled, one could mistake this oversized book for a dictionary of biography. Contents: uneven, as it can be in the case of an unplanned anthology, yet substantial. German literature is represented by some of the finest writers of the century, living and dead: Paul Celan, Bertolt Brecht, Gottfried Benn, Gunter Grass, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Sarah Kirsch, Erich Fried. . . The Indian list too is not without outstanding names like U.R. Anantha Murthy, Dilip Chitre, Nirmal Verma, Krishna Sobti, K.B. Vaid, Kunwar Narain and others, only it is diluted by the inclusion of several mediocre writers.

An assessment of the linguistic geography of the anthology can be revealing. The southern and western languages are represented by one writer each from Kannada and Marathi respectively; the eastern languages by two, one Oriya and one Bengali. Of the northern, Hindi gets the lion's share, more than its due (eighteen out of a total of twenty-nine Indian writers in the collection are Hindi writers); Urdu, Himachali and Dogri each get one while Punjabi has three. A good majority of these writers live and work in Delhi—or frequent Delhi—and it is this convenience, and not choice, that has obviously and understandably prompted the organizers to invite them to Max Mueller Bhavan to read from their work—this anthology is a compilation of the pieces thus read.

One may well interrogate the propriety of bringing in statistics while discussing a work that belongs more to the realm of poetics. However, it is difficult not to be concerned with the politics of cultural exchange where the same language and the same names are in constant circulation. Just look at the major literatures gone unrepresented here: Gujarati, Manipuri, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam. And the grossly underrepresented ones: Marathi, Urdu, Oriya, Bengali, English. My friend Barbara Lotz, the co-editor of the volume spares no pains to explain the neglect of the South—though it is not only the South as one can see from the above observations—in her well-written introduction (the other introduction is by Vishnu Khare her co-editor) and I have no doubts about the good intentions of Lothar Lutze, that great lover of Indian, especially Hindi, literature as well as Barbara Lotz. These inequalities are only a reflection of certain social phenomena beyond their control—the concentration of writers in the capital, their aggressiveness and feeling of self-importance, the consequent marginalization of provincial talents, the unevenness of media attention. A mediocre writer in Delhi inevitably gets more highly rated and more widely publicized than an excellent writer in a village in Bihar or Madhya Pradesh, let alone in the remote South. And it takes courage and wisdom to realize this and look beyond. But when our own organizations fall prey to the metropolitan megalomania we have little reason to blame agencies from other lands for being unfair. This is, after all, a hand extended in love; let me take off my gloves.

The Indian section that occupies the major part of the anthology features seven fiction writers and twenty-two poets. Their pieces are presented in the original language with German and English translations. For the purpose of the review I depend solely on the English versions though I have also gone through the originals in Hindi—the only other language in this collection I follow well. The extract from Manzoor Ahtesham's Urdu novel reveals an experimental fiction writer attempting a metanovel. The author's sense of humour and the play of his imagination have come through very well in Kuldip Singh's careful translation. Here is a sample:

> "In point of fact 'Lapata Bhopali is a white ant feeding on the waste of my being, my soul. In him regrets rather than love burn bright. He is not interested in that which 'remains', for it is there; whereas he is saddened by that which is 'no more' because it cannot be regained. In simpler words, he is one of those who, even while living in concrete houses refuse not to dream of their shacks pulled down to make way for those houses.

. . 'Lapata' has written a couplet about himself. 'My being is a conglomerate of other beings, my ribs a boat. The heart is Mecca and pain Medina'. To say anything more will be like holding a candle to the sun."

U.R. Anantha Murthy's 'A Horse for the Sun' (*Soorynakudirai*) is easily one of the best short stories of modern Indian literature, with its unusual narrative structure tapering on to pure poetry, its insight into the rural milieu, its mockery of the bookish middle class intellectual totally alienated from ground realities and its superb style and craftsmanship. English cannot hope to capture the tonal qualities of Kannada that are so important to the story especially towards the end where it assumes the quality of a mantra. German with its links with Sanskrit sounds better. This story, though a bit long could have been published in full; here the reader gets only an excerpt.

Satyen Kumar's story—again excerpted—of a seemingly elder girl seducing a boy in romantic circumstances is plain ordinary. But the reader is immediately compensated by an excerpt from Uday Prakash's 'Chhappan Tole Ka Kardhan' ('The Golden Waist-Chain' as translated here: who cares how much it weighed) that tells the symbolic tale of a bird-loving grandfather whose act of defiance—asking the British officer not to shoot his ducks—drives him out of the village into the legend. Before Independence he could stop a moving train-engine all by himself and push it back for miles, but after Independence, he couldn't lift even a *lota* (a small brasspot) and his grandchildren, children of the midnight, even while young, couldn't lift it either—a metaphor for the frailty and cowardice of the post-independence generation. Uday Prakash is easily one of the most subtle and responsible story writers now in Hindi: even this story, which is not his

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best, testifies to this. What follows is an excerpt from Krishna Sobti's *Mitro Marjani*, that little masterpiece portraying Mitro the defiant woman, the very embodiment of freedom and desire, who shocks the conservative establishment with her uninhibited behaviour. Krishna Baldev Vaid's short story *Andhere Ki Atma* (The Soul of Darkness) is reproduced in full. Though brief the story is typical of Vaid's style of speaking through symbols and metaphors: here is a man confronting the growing darkness of a narrow dungeon in his own house: this darkness may be an unconscious fear, an area of ignorance, a growing amnesia, a past experience of guilt, or suppressed Desire. Provoked it beats him up like a hidden ghost, yet the man recounts the blows with masochistic joy. Nirmal Verma's piece—an extract from *London Ki Ek Raat* (A Night in London)—is full of drama though hardly representative despite its revelations about racism in London.

The poetry section is richer. It begins with Kumar Ambuj's poems, two of them rather poorly translated into English by Ashutosh Dubey with awkward lines like "She will . . . serve me food and insist that I must have *little* more the way the mothers can do. . . *She'll see the decline of the body she had created herself*" or "Much life remains a little time". But the poems have just enough strength to survive these (*Akasmat ek Din*, strangely translated as *Mother will Arrive*) onslaughts. Even Vishnu Khare, a fine translator of poetry into Hindi, sounds at times wearisome in English, as when he translates a simple line from Sanjay Chaturvedi's *Lutere bankar Itihas* like *Na jaane kya hoga is shahar mein* as 'What happenings will be witnessed in this city?' Sanjay Chaturvedi seems to belong to Raghuvir Sahay's clan and like many less talented poets who followed him ends up being a little verbose. The economy of the earlier poem gives way to rhetoric in *Paise ke Daant* (The Fangs of Money). Shaista Anwar's poems are the very opposite and prove that subjective poetry too can be flat.

> Bunches of yellow flowers, here and there. Green leaves. I examined them, leaf by leaf. Curious as to what his gaze was aimed at, I closely scrutinized everything that fell within my view. Then I saw it: a sun's horse. Seeing this innocent friend of mine watch with such rapture this insect with its raised crooked legs, a light body, a green geometrical angular *ashtavakra* form, I was amused for a moment. But only for a moment. The sun's horse sprang; and as it sprang, Venkata's intent head with its crop of hair sprang with it in sympathy. I felt happy. Venkata turned around and, looking at me, said with such innocent ecstasy: "The sun's horse.Æ My eyes looked into those wonder-struck eyes of his that had seen the sun's horse and my mouth fell open: "The sun's horse' I said.
>
> From U.R. Ananthamurthy's 'A Horse for the Sun' (Translated from Kannada by Manu Shetty and A.K. Ramanujan)

Dilip Chitre's poems are uncompromisingly modern in perception as he shows us the sights the blind see: "The blind one's skin can see. The coarse primeval surface of the world. In the palms of the blind one's hand unfold/ Vistas/Like man and woman//Separate yet coupled/Alone together." (Sights the Blind View) The feelings become more self-consciously Indian in his poem in English where he remembers the house of his childhood "all its furniture gone/Except my grandmother's grindstone/And the brass figurines of her gods." He feels like "an elderly infant" exploring "the rooms of age" as he toddles around the empty house while his grandmother's voice "shivers on a bare branch". Listening to the fourth Brandenburg concerto (*Chautha Brandenburg Kanchertho*) he sees flocks of birds spread over the canvas of his hearing while "morning becomes a warbling of countless colours and tones". This vision, "of life springing and flowing out of millions of mouths" convinces him of God's existence. Music becomes "the primordial language spreading underneath all speech", man's mother tongue, if one may say so. Manglesh Dabral, as sensitive a poet as ever, is precise in his image, a precision made even more perfect in Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's translation as when *roshniyan raakh ho chukee hain* becomes 'the lights are ash' in English, or *'kithne saare patte udkar aathe hain chehre par mere bachpan ke pedon se'* turns into the crisper 'The leaves that settle on my face/Fall from my childhood trees'. (*Patton ki Mrityu*: The Death of Leaves). I have always liked Manglesh's poems for their element of wonderment, their dreamy quality exemplified also by the poems in this selection like *Sapna* (Dream) *Kucch der Ke liye* (For a while) and *Shahar* (City). 'City' sums up the experience of a whole cross section of urban society: "I looked at the city/and smiled/and walked in/Who would ever want to live here/I wondered/and never went back."

Alokeranjan Dasgupta's poems are typically urban. The stamp of the expatriate is evident. Nida Fazli's Urdu poems betray the cynicism of the city-dweller: "The current of the convulsing crowds/Has a speed too fast/Nobody looks at nobody here/No friendship/No love/No philosophy. . ." (On the Road) or "Just keep on living like this/Say nothing/ . . . Be thankful you are safe. . ." (Just keep on Living). Gagan Gill's *Majhali* (The Fish) expresses an asphyxiating longing for freedom; the fish trapped in water with the sky in its brain becomes a metaphor of unfreedom stung by desire. Her *Aadhe Sir Ka Dard* (translated as a pale 'Migraine') is a poem on the verge of the metaphysical: the head aches when there is a mound of dry grief inside the skull that God tries to discover by letting the river of blood swell and touch it. "This is an insistence/between body and soul/between soul and the creator of its grief/ to puncture the blister/hidden in a corner." *Kisee Doosare Ka Prem* (Somebody Else's Love) speaks of drifting love: we leave our own love behind someone else's door while sometimes somebody else's love drifts into our lives until someone comes looking for it and takes it away. Pramod Kaunswal has obviously misunderstood bare description for poetry and progressivist attitude as a matter entirely of theme; both his poems leave the reader cold. Vishnu Khare is the master of the long line and his poems border on the narrative as is the case with both of his poems appearing here. If the former is like a chant invoking the bygone days and the lost relatives who might have peopled his cityhouse and turned it into a house, the latter fills a game of cricket with the mystery of a vague presence turning it into a game of life and death.

The three pieces by the Oriya poet Sitakant Mahapatra are his most frequently anthologized ones, 'Dhangda's Love Song', 'Time Does not Fly' and 'The Wind'. When he is good, Sitakant Mahapatra expresses a sense of the transient nature of life and things: "It is not time that flies. /It is men, all creatures/everywhere." ('Time Does not Fly'). At times he grows romantic as in Dhangda's song of love or concretizes the abstract in the form of sculpted images as in 'The Wind'. He recollects the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 with intense bitterness to find out that 'history is the conflict between identities'. The same pain also informs his 'Dialogue' where silence alone makes life bearable. Kunwar Narayan's forte is irony as when he observes, 'In a world crammed with spectators/balancing while acting the clown's role/in good faith/was the greatest feat of all' (Circus) or when he bemoans the transformation of Rama's empire into a disputed site and Rama himself into an election symbol while unreason looms large with a thousand heads and hands driving him back to the pages of the Puranas: "Our jungles are not those of days of yore when roamed Valmiki." 'Clarification' demythifies the context of the Gita, Arjuna asking Krishna for an explanation, and places it in the broader context of life and history: we too can defer war at least for a while, say 'No' to it and ask God for a clarification. It is Arjuna the doubter that saves the world, and not Arjuna the fighter.

Surjeet Patar, perhaps the most outstanding Punjabi poet of the second generation—after Harbhajan Singh and Amrita Pritam—wonders at the metamorphosis of lambs into wolves and wolves into lambs in the compartment of a train (An Animal Tale). And in a crisp, almost Brechtian piece he writes: "I walk just two or three steps/and find myself in an alien land./How small are the shadows/ of the trees/planted by me". In a dialogue between two trees one tree asks the other "Would you construct a scaffold out of me or a musical instrument, Sir?" The newspapers have only fallen leaves in them the books have only seeds, thoughts are full of axe-marks, only prison fills the dreams. Patar's poems thus become oblique comments on the grim human and political situation in the country especially in the Punjab. Prayag Shukla sums up the act of writing: "What was vivid is behind me. /What is ahead moves back. /Yet here I sit, /and this I write:/it lives". His poem on Delhi springs from that love-hate that the city invokes in most of its inhabitants: "Even in Delhi, cuckoos call/ Leaves fall/ Ants crawl up the tree. . . Even in Delhi/ Rise the stars. Even in Delhi/The butterfly darts." The poet tries to come to terms with the city by discovering the village within it.

Kedarnath Singh is one of the few Hindi poets who still retain the magic of language while the majority in their attempt to liberate poetry from romanticism have abandoned poetic imagination itself: post-Raghuvir Sahay poetry is mostly skin and bones. 'Reading a Love Poem' brings a poem alive where every line enacts the meanings of its words. The reader looking for ducks in the poems encounters only a woman waiting for a bus, a woman cutting up potatoes, a teak tree casting a strange dread over the poem. . . the lines filled with light, shade, odours, colours, voices and movements as we move forward. As the lines end, the woman stands outside the poem breaking it apart. 'Benaras', one of Kedarnath Singh's most discussed poems, unfolds the mystery of the holy city—also the poet's birth place—in vivid and striking images. Everything is dreamy here

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verything is slow. Present and past
ow here in a continuum, so do life and
ath: "All there is/stands/without
pport/and all there is not/is sup-
rted by tall pillars of ash and light."
Tell me, the language of my Siraj,
hat dies first in this world./The lan-
uage or those who speak it!"—this cry
f Maryam Singh the Siraji (Himachali)
et echoes the pathos of many Indian
ngues on the verge of death. Ashok
peyi is the poet of nature, love and
e body. One gets the feeling that he is
le to endure the city only because of
e fond memories of his rural child-
od and its shapes and sounds and
e tender and benign presence of
men and of poetry. 'A Possibility',
Body is Heard by a Body' and 'Search'
this collection are typical in their
ger search for the vanishing contours
d memory and longing.

The German portion opens with a
scinating piece of travel writing—a
ghly personalized one by Jurek Becker
his visit to New York, followed by
epilogue of Hans Christoph Buch's
vel 'Dead Columbus speaks on
dgement Day' beautifully rendered
Padma Rao capturing all the magic
the myth expressed in a style remi-
cent of the Old Testament in the
thorized version of the Bible. The
ract from Uwe Timm's novel is
ally engrossing: Lena Brucker, at
y, offers shelter to Bremer, a run-
ay from the Second World War. She
s in love with him and tries to con-
al the end of the war from him so that
may not leave her. The soldier, the
soner of her love, is uneasy in his
de-out, disturbed by doubts as he
ses a change in the air. The narration
dramatic, tense and terse at the same
me. The poetry section, though inad-
quate, presents some of the finest tal-
ts in contemporary German poetry:
ottfried Benn, Bertolt Brecht, Paul
lan, Gunter Eich, Enzensberger, Erich
ied, Gunter Grass, Sarah Kirsch and
deus' Pfeifer, all represented by po-
s characteristic of their style. Soarah
rsch is available only to those who
ow either German or Marathi: a
ndi or English version would have
ped other readers. Pfeifer's poem
ys: "To keep silent not to say/To
nceal/What you know./What is
ch known/To speak about it./To
scuss/As much as you can/Is the
t". I am yet to master this art and
nce refrain from any elaborate com-
ents on Brecht and Celan and other
ell known writers I have translated,
ritten about and lived with for de-
des.

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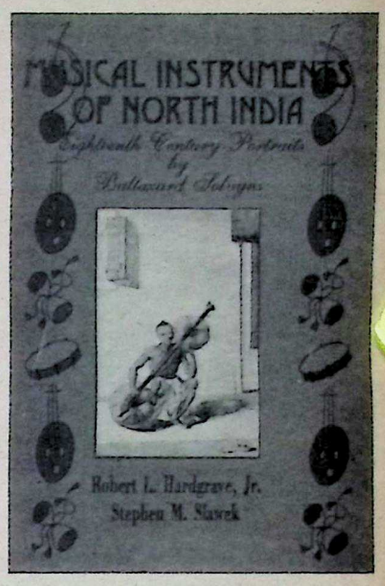
A Rich Heritage



Partho Datta

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF NORTH INDIA: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PORTRAITS BY BALTAZARD SOLVYNS

By Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr. and Stephen M. Slawek

Manohar Publications, 1997, pp. 153, Rs. 475.00

KHYAL: CREATIVITY WITHIN NORTH INDIA'S CLASSICAL MUSIC TRADITION

By Bonnie C. Wade

Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997, pp. 314, Rs. 650.00 (with audio cassette)

Baltazard Solvyns is perhaps not as well known as his fellow travelling artists like the Daniells whose works have been best sellers since the late eighteenth century. Recently a Daniell painting sold for many thousand pounds at an auction at Sotheby's in London which only proves the enduring value of these quaint picturesque views even today. The Daniells literally produced hundreds of works which embraced many mediums (etchings, drawings oils etc.) and is probably one of the reasons why their reproductions are still circulating in the market today. Solvyns on the other hand successively produced various large tomes beginning in 1794 from Calcutta with *A Collection of Two Hundred and Fifty Coloured Etchings: Descriptive of the Manners, Customs and Dresses of the Hindoos* and culminating in the four elephantine volumes of *Les Hindous* published from Paris between 1808 and 1812. Not surprisingly they had limited circulation and fame, their girth, size and price keeping it out of reach of amateur enthusiasts and limiting its acquisition only to wealthy collectors and libraries.

Unlike the Daniells, Solvyns' etchings of the 'manners, customs and dresses' do not make exciting drawing room prints. Solvyns was a sharp observer yet his portrayal of Indians is rather dull and stereotypical. As the editors say in their introduction, Solvyns 'approached his task as an ethnographer, drawing his subjects from life and with more concern for accuracy than aesthetics'. Although he drew Calcutta's "Blacktown" (i.e. the Indian settlements to the north), there are few identifiable locations in his album. This is the crucial difference with artists like the Daniells whose works while abounding in landscapes and monuments were very often completely devoid of people. At this point I just can't help preening about the fact that I must be one of the lucky few to have actually seen the Solvyns volumes in the original. These volumes are in the collection of the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta and must have been acquired when Lord Curzon decided to build a memorial to his favourite queen and collect all that was 'beneficent and good about the Raj' under one roof. Curzon's perspicacity it seems only worked for India's past, he had notoriously reactionary views on Indian nationalism, and his reputation has since eclipsed. But his collection at the Memorial survives in mint condition today. That it does is a tribute to the farsightedness of the late Nisith R. Ray, doyen of Calcutta historians and director of the Memorial in the 1960s, who ensured that fragile and rare printed works were kept in special airconditioned vaults to save them from the humid weather of the city. Admittedly entrance to these vaults is marred now by red-tapism and bureaucratic suspicion, but once past these hurdles the enthusiast will be delighted to see how well the Solvyns volumes have survived. It is a pity that the original binding of these volumes cannot be seen any longer. In 1990 during the Calcutta tercentenary, a special gallery paying tribute to the city was opened in the Memorial and individual plates were removed from the Solvyns volumes and framed and hung separately as examples of contemporary art from the late eighteenth century. At least it has made accessible to the general public some examples of Solvyns' craft.

Solvyns as the editors inform us was born in Antwerp in 1760 and originally started as a 'marine painter' (presumably someone who accompanied trading voyages to the Orient). Political unrest in Europe drove him to find his fortune in India, where other artists like Thomas Hodges, the Daniells and portrait painters like Tilly Kettle, Thomas Hickey and John Zofanny were already trying to win, 'the patronage of nabobs and nawabs alike'. Solvyns landed in Calcutta in 1791 and sensibly decided to earn his living as a sort of journeyman artist, restoring paintings, providing decorations etc. since his talents in either landscape or portraiture were rather inadequate compared to his contemporaries. But clearly he had other large projects in mind. In 1794 inspired by the "Asiatick Researches" of William Jones he set out to record in detail the daily life and professions of "Hindoos". In 1804 he left India for France where he married into money which enabled him to publish the volumes he is best known for and admired today.

The editors have made a selection from the various Solvyns volumes and chosen the plates which show North Indian musical instruments. They have reproduced the original English commentary (Solvyns had also provided a text in French) with extensive comments and annotations of their own. One can't but admire the diligent scholarship of the editors. They have carefully scoured all the available material on these instruments and have established their historicity carefully. Since Solvyns worked in Calcutta there is a profusion of instruments local to East India. Bengalis for instance will recognize the *dhak, dhol, khol* and *kasar*. The *sitar, sarangi, tabla, pakhawaj, tabla, bin* and *tampura* are familiar to all who are acquainted with Hindustani classical music. Many instruments (like the

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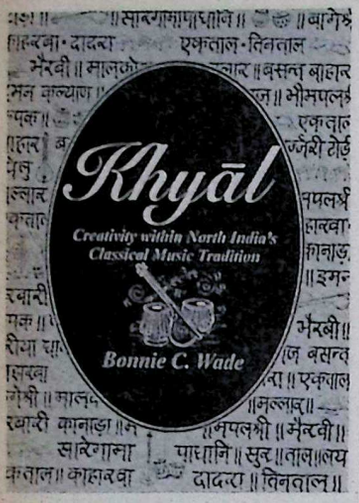

pinak) have fallen in disuse today though the impression generally is of remarkable continuity and development. There are also two fascinating sections on the Nautch. Solvyns' commentary is sometimes intemperate, but he is reasonably accurate and his illustrations are an invaluable record of the way instruments were built and played almost two hundred years ago.

It is a little mystifying that the editors, Robert Hardgrave (who is well known for his classic study *The Nadars of Tamilnad*) and Stephen Slawek (professor of ethnomusicology) have strictly restricted their role as annotators only. There is plenty of evidence in the texts that they reproduce to hazard some large scale generalizations. I am particularly struck by the fact that there is no attempt at drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism*. It is true that ever since the blistering critiques of Aijaz Ahmed and Sumit Sarkar, scholars have been a little wary of treading the well-worn path of Orientalist conspiracies. But anybody who has read Said's magnificent chapter on Napoleon's *textual* colonization of Egypt will not fail to notice certain similarities. There is no doubt that modern colonial exploitation went hand in hand with the massive production of systematic data on the colonized. Said has remarked that *Description de l'Egypte* was literally a "large" project, not just in the amount of information collected but also in the printed size of the individual folios. There is too much affinity here with Solvyns to pass unnoticed, especially since his work is contemporaneous with the rule of Lord Wellesley, British India's first modernizer whose town planning schemes for Calcutta unleashed not unsimilar discourses. But this connection seems to have eluded the editors. Secondly it's a pity that although they liken Solvyns' work to that of a modern ethnographer, they do little to establish the links between colonialism and anthropology. There is no doubt that Solvyns' tomes form an important precedent to precisely this kind of connection. Thirdly the editors mention in passing that Solvyns was categorical that his work dealt only with Hindus for he did not fail to make clear his contempt for Muslims in general. Here then is another quality of Orientalism, which made it so attractive to early nationalists forever in a hurry to forget their Islamic past. Did Solvyns anticipate the likes of Max Mueller? This tantalizing question immediately comes to mind. Certainly their attempt to capture the East within standardized volumes does not seem dissimilar although they specialized in different cultural fields. But the editors it seem fight shy of such questions.

Bonnie C. Wade's *Khyal* was originally published in 1984 by Cambridge University Press in its prestigious ethnomusicology series. This work of meticulous empiricism which recalls once again the great works of nineteenth century scholar-ethnographers, goes over the history of the primary vocal genre in North Indian classical music and constructs a narrative of enviable lucidity. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, the great scholar-musician whose own efforts at textualization in the early decades of this century was not dissimilar would have been immensely pleased with Wade's work. But there is an irony about its publishing history. CUP's price for the book when converted to Indian currency worked out to more than 2000 rupees. Thus despite making so much effort at chronicling the history of *khyal* the author effectively ensured that nobody would be able to read her book in India. Now fourteen years after its first publication an Indian reprint has finally seen the light of the day thanks to the enterprise of a Delhi publisher specializing in Orientalia.

The burden of this book is devoted to explicating the style or *gayaki* of the six main lineages or *gharanas* in Hindustani vocal music. The *gharanas* discussed are Gwalior, Agra, Sahaswan/Rampur, Jaipur/Atrauli which the author insists on calling Alladiya Khan (by the founder's name), Kirana and Patiala. Each of these are discussed separately in individual chapters. A concluding chapter discusses vocalists who do not fit easily within the bounds of the *gharana* system because of their marked individuality. Besides this the book is also prefaced by two extremely useful chapters which fill in the historical background and delineate the main characteristics that distinguish *khyal* as a genre of vocal music. Thus for instance separate sections are devoted to explaining *alap, ciz, bolbant, boltan, tan* etc. Definitions are supported by notations and short examples are provided in the accompanying audio cassette. People who are unfamiliar with *khyal*, or the new enthusiast who is in search of an authentic introduction will benefit immensely from these. At this point it is well worth mentioning that while similar introductions abound in Indian languages, in English it was pioneered by Peggy Holroyd whose *Music of India* published in 1972 (with a preface by sitar maestro Ravi Shankar) has a whole section called 'Memoria Technica' which is not dissimilar from what Wade has tried to do. It is a pity therefore that this book does not merit a mention in her bibliography. But there is need for some caution here for no amount of wisdom on grammar or technique is likely to endear classical music to anybody all the same such efforts remain praiseworthy.

The already converted will needless to say straightaway proceed to the individual accounts of the *gharanas* in Wade's book. These are roughly divided into three sections. The first two are a detailed history of the *gharana* and individual artistes, and Wade has taken immense pains to also construct the family and musical lineages of every *gharana*. The real strength of the book I feel lies here. Wade has literally left no stone upturned in her quest to gather valuable information for these sections. She has consulted every book, essay, stray reference (in at least three languages) and interviewed all the major figures, collated and cross-checked the information available and tried to arrive at a reasonable picture for the past. This is not an easy job. Most of the historical material on Hindustani classical music is a mix of anecdote, apocrypha and fact and it needs patience and perseverance to disentangle one from the other. Wade's herculean effort is therefore more than just commendable. Honourable mention though must be made in this context of S.K. Chaubey's *Sangeet Ke Gharanon ki Charcha* in Hindi (1977) and the family and musical lineages compiled by Jayantakumar Mukhopadhyay appended to Bimlakanta Roychowdhury's *Bharatiya Sangitkosh* in Bengali (1979). This is not to discount Wade's tremendous effort which despite these precedents, is certainly admirable, all the more since it has been done by someone who is an outsider to the local culture of North India.

The third section in her chapters is a detailed analysis of individual and *gharana* styles with the help of notations. Wade has painfully transcribed large sections of individual performances into Indian and western notation. Sometimes this pays off. For instance her discussion of Krishna Rao Shankar Pandit (Gwalior) makes sense, for notations do help to unfold his complicated style even though it carries the risk of oversimplification. On the other hand when Wade discussed Latafat Husain Khan (Agra) her explanation becomes reductive: 'In a total of 35 cycles in this Miyan ki Todi performance.. (he) stopped his *mukhda* before *sam* (*atit*) 19 times; twice he broke just at *sam* and sang the pitch just after *sam* (*anagat*); nine time he hit right on *sam*. .'etc.

Clearly such counting takes us nowhere and points to the pitfalls of textualizing Indian classical music. I have used this quote above not to sneer at this kind of analysis but just to warn the reader that it will be of interest only to the die-hard musicologist. Whether such attempts genuinely help us to understand oral traditions like *khyal* will remain open to debate. One thing is however clear. Even after a century of dedication beginning with both European and Indian Orientalists in the nineteenth century (like Sourindramohan Tagore) Indian classical music has somehow refused to be tamed by the dictates of notation.

I am also a trifle disappointed that although Wade has allowed an Indian edition after fourteen years she hasn't bothered to write a new introduction. Unfortunately typographical and other errors have also been allowed to remain. In one instance picture captions have been interchanged (between Vilayat Husain Khan and Amir Khan). Such small mistakes could easily have been rectified. A new introduction was certainly necessary since otherwise one comes away with the impression that nothing has changed in the field of *khyal* in the last decade or so. On the contrary the situation had changed *dramatically*.

For one the most obvious change in the last ten years has been in the area of patronage. The urban middle classes and a burgeoning consumer culture now effectively determines the success and failure of artists. The success of the classical cassettes and CDs by *Music Today* is a pointer to what canny marketing can do even to 'high culture'. Music festivals, as the critic Subbudu has recently pointed out is now effectively in the hands of the tobacco and liquor lobbies. The patronage of the Indian state is no less important. It is impossible not to see that new forms of patronage have affected both the form and content of *khyal*. Conservatives are bound to be dismayed by such developments but every cloud has its silver lining. It is no small mercy that the

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rapidly expanding constituency of classical music in the 1980s was responsible for the resurrection of the career of Mallikarjun Mansoor late in his life. Looking back now it is possible to argue that Mansoor's name has to perforce figure among the acknowledged 'greats' (like Amir Khan or Bade Ghulam Ali) who set standards in vocal music in the years following Independence. Such revision is certainly welcome. I was wondering if Wade would have given more space to Mansoor other than the obligatory paragraph if she were to publish her book today. Amir Khan was no doubt an outstanding individual vocalist but his style drew heavily on Kirana. It no longer seems very useful to separate him from that tradition. On the other hand Kishori Amonkar who has only very tenuous links with her parent gharana (Jaipur/Atrauli) is championed as a votary of the Alladiya tradition, a honour best reserved for Mansoor. The most puzzling omission of course is Kumar Gandharva who certainly deserves a place as one of the most idiosyncratic artistes that Hindustani classical music has ever produced.

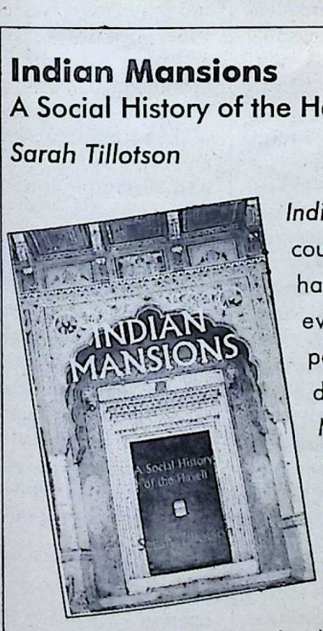
Another important revolution has been the systematic listing and availability of 78 r.p.m. recordings from 1900 onwards. I want to stress this because even if these are limited to 3 or 5 minutes, they form the most important informal sound archive of our musical heritage. In this sphere the dedicated work of scholars like Michael Kinnear, Gerry Farrell, Peter Manuel and collectors like the sculptor Sarbari Roychowdhury (Santiniketan) and Amlan Dasgupta (Calcutta)—and there are many others, have indeed been pathbreaking. The richness and variety of this archive is mind boggling. Recordings exist of Rahimat Khan (son of Haddu Khan, Gwalior), Ashiq Ali Khan (son of Fateh Ali of Alliafattu fame, Patiala), Umed Khan (son of Pyar Khan, Gwalior-Patiala); Sureshbabu Mane (son of Abdul Karim), Aman Ali (founder of Bhendi Bazar *gharana*)—the list is unending. Even more surprising is literally the thousands of recordings by female vocalists or *bai's*. HMV has recently released a selection in a series entitled Chairman's Choice which includes the early recordings of Jankibai, Acchanbai, Zohrabai, Malkajan and Gauharjan. To ignore this valuable archive would be to condescend to a powerful but underrated current in India's vocal music and to fall victim to the self image of the *gharana* as a lineage of only male singers. Once again, what it has meant in terms of form and content has only recently begun to be investigated (notably in the yet to be published work of Amlan Dasgupta and Lakshmi Subramaniam). Indeed it is even possible to argue that a feminist history of classical music in India is now for the first time becoming possible.

Finally, Wade's approach, seen retrospectively seems to be rather 'old fashioned' and far too dependent on the norms of ethnomusicology—which tries to discover the fundamental principles underlying exotic cultures at the cost of social history. It is impossible for instance to study Indian culture today without at least a nodding acquaintance with concepts like 'Orientalism', 'Imagined Community' (or nationalism), 'textualization', 'Invention of Tradition', and the impact of technology (in this case recording and reproduction of sound). Buried in Wade's own text are fascinating bits of information which certainly needs to be brought to the fore. This consists of passing comments on the decreasing speed of *khyal* (without doubt connected to patronage and the rise of a modern sense of subjectivity among artistes themselves), the disassociation of thumri from dancing, and the figure of V.N. Bhatkhande who as Wade suggestively argues typified the 'moment' where tradition and change came together in the sphere of classical music. But alas, having thrown this nugget she refuses to elaborate any further. Elsewhere she mentions the pain that Abdul Karim Khan felt at the move towards a 'de-Muslimization' of music. As she points out herself this trend was most noticeable in the figure of Omkarnath Thakur in the 1950s whose aggressive nationalism often meant denying the contribution of Muslims. What this attitude did to his singing style is still a matter of debate among aficinados!

It is precisely because Wade has so much to offer that debate with her becomes possible at several levels. There is no doubt that her book is an outstanding contribution to the history and theory of *khyal*. Her scholarship is impeccable and will remain unsurpassed for many years to come. Indian readers will be grateful for the opportunity to possess such a comprehensive volume.

Partho Datta teaches history at Zakir Hussain Evening College, New Delhi.

Indian Mansions
A Social History of the Haveli
Sarah Tillotson



Indian Mansions follows the course of a day in the life of a haveli, expanding specific events to examine wider patterns of life. The book draws from the diary of the Mughal emperor Babur to the reminiscences of those who worked for the British East India Company. The information is brought up to date by the author's first-hand interviews with those who live in the havelies today.

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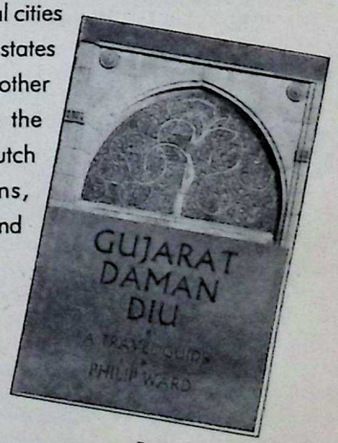
Gujarat — Daman — Diu
A Travel Guide
Philip Ward

Between the hills of Maharashtra and Rajasthan to the north and east, the Pakistan border to the west, and the Arabian Sea to the south, Gujarat is a state which is unsurpassed for architectural and natural beauties. Starting from the stunning Islamic monuments of Ahmedabad and other cities, this travel guide explores the coastal cities of Gujarat, the princely states of Borada, and amongst other details, ends fittingly in the isolated region of the Kutch — with walled towns, beaches, desert wildlife, and tribes untarnished by commercialism.



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Socio-ecological Approach to Development

N.C. Saxena

INDIA'S DRYLANDS: TRIBAL SOCIETIES AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL REGENERATION

By Mihir Shah, Debashis Banerji, P.S. Vijayshankar and Pramathesh Ambasta

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 322, Rs. 525.00

More than 60 per cent of India's cultivated land is under unirrigated conditions. It has been estimated that even after full irrigation potential of the country has been achieved, it will not be possible to irrigate even 50 per cent of the cultivated area. Thus, almost half of India's arable land is likely to continue being farmed under rainfed conditions. These lands have remained neglected both in terms of investment and technology. Ecological degradation has continued in these areas due to soil and water run-off. Water table has gone down. Forest cover has been depleted and severity of drought has increased.

India's drylands are home to almost two-thirds of its tribal population. The traditional symbiotic relationship of the tribal communities with their environment has been progressively fractured over time. They were dependent on forests and other natural resources but their access to these resources has been progressively curtailed due to unimaginative and anti-tribal forest policies. In addition, the breakdown of traditional institutions for managing common property resources and the failure of new institutions such as panchayats to fill the vacuum has also been responsible for the denudation of natural resources. The traditional community-based ethos has given place to individualized or market-driven exploitation of natural resources without any regard for adverse externalities of such action. Programmes which were taken up in these areas were dependent entirely on the top-down bureaucracy, with very little participation from the village communities.

The present book sets out principles of a new socio-ecological approach to development of India's drylands. The authors show how agricultural growth and employment planning can be based on environmental regeneration of drylands of India. The book claims to 'outline the qualitative contours of such an innovative strategy and quantify its productivity and employment potential'. Thus, the book provides the framework or a new structure for participatory growth through people's institutions in rural India.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter one shows how existing economic theory with 'its twin presumption of free gifts and free disposals fails to come in terms with the interface between economics and environment'. This chapter upholds adoption of a location-specific approach, based on the unique natural resource endowments of each region. Chapter two advocates that an employment policy focused on increasing the productivity of drylands would not only be non-inflationary but will also lead to sustained increase in production. This argument is then picked up in chapter six, which reviews the performance of employment programmes in the country. The present employment oriented programmes hardly lead to the creation of durable and viable assets and thus should be modified urgently. Moreover, until a few years back, economic programmes undertaken in drought-prone areas were based on over-exploitation of ground water resources, which led to further decline in water table. Sustainability was sacrificed to favour temporary private gains for a few big farmers.

Chapter three questions the present strategy of agricultural growth based on groundwater extraction. The rapid development in groundwater based irrigation in many states has caused groundwater depletion, because of which the life of borewell or other such water supply source becomes short. Highly subsidized irrigation electricity tariffs have led to an indiscriminate and disproportionate level of groundwater extraction. Although significant areas in States, such as Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh (in all 144 districts in 10 states) have been declared 'dark' and 'grey' zones, there has been no let up in the depletion of groundwater aquifers. The official figures of groundwater availability given by the Groundwater Board are challenged in this chapter, but practical implication of the data has not been discussed.

Chapter four provides a working definition of drylands in India, and chapter five looks at the implication of dryland productivity for tribal population. The next three chapters deal with the economics and technological aspects of watershed development in India. Finally, issues of participation are touched in the last chapter.

It is argued in these chapters that for increasing productivity of drylands via watershed planning there should be a holistic approach to bring about the development of integrated farming systems on a watershed basis. However, such a programme calls for decentralized planning, competent and committed bureaucratic support and people's participation. The outstanding examples of success at Ralegaon Sidhi and Adgaon in Maharashtra, Kabbarnala in Karnataka and Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh show that drought can be beaten, provided concerted efforts for development on watershed basis are made, with motivated and determined leadership and full participation of local farmers. The authors of this book deal with the subject of watershed planning with the help of a case study of a programme which is already under execution in Neemkhera village in District Dewas (Madhya Pradesh). A detailed costing of the plan along with its employment generating potential is provided along with the stream of activities. The authors then go to project macro-economic implications of this micro-plan for drylands of the country.

On the basis of an initial assessment of the natural resource endowments in the village, three eco-zones were identified within the watershed. Individual household-wise plan was then prepared for all the hundred and ten households of the village, taking into account their requirements of food, water, fertilizers, fodder and domestic energy. The plan then proposed specific water harvesting strategies for each household through dug wells, percolation ponds, underground dykes and other such structures. Water harvesting was then combined with on-farm measures of soil and water harvesting to reduce the run-off from the farm and to raise the soil moisture level. The soil capacity was improved by increasing the supply of organic manure and by making recycling process of biomass resources more efficient through composing and other forms of microbial degradations. Such drop varieties were popularized which were less demanding on soil nutrients. Productive capacity of common lands and forests was improved through grazing regulations combined with fresh tree and shrub plantations.

Despite covering an important and neglected area of public concern, the book fails to impress a policy adviser, nor does it arouse the intellectual curiosity of an academic. The book rightly recognizes the need for people centred policies, but does not describe the internal and external conditions under which people in a village come together for common action. Tribal societies have had a close relation with forests, but policy changes required in the forestry sector are not discussed in the book at all. There is a wealth of grey literature on watershed development generated by the donor agencies, which throws light on conditions leading to success or failure of projects, but the authors have not used this knowledge in building up their case study on Neemkhera village.

The last chapter of the book suggesting a broad framework within which modalities of cooperation between different agents of change could be worked out through people's participation is rather disappointing. A number of questions remain unanswered. Should one promote community organizations through formal institution of panchayat, or should the group be formed at the hamlet level with fewer participants, as the panchayat is often too large an institution to give a feeling of participation to the members? The political economy of both panchayats and NGOs should have been discussed. For instance, panchayats are political institutions and are not good at fostering unity. They are based on conflict often the product of village factionalism which is not conducive to promote management of common resources. Panchayats are dominated and manipulated by powerful leaders even in tribal societies. Where both structure and procedures for a group is pre-determined, such as in panchayats, flexibility for shaping development needs of the people is sacrificed. Institutional and capacity building often starts with a small, simple and single focus group and then with time it leads to larger, complex and multi-purpose organization. Groups thus begin informally and get formalized later when sufficient experience is gained.

The book has also overlooked the role that small water storage tanks could play in replenishing the underground reservoir for drinking and irrigation purposes. Individual chapters are well written but they do not jell into a cohesive document, which could be of use to researchers or policy makers.

N.C. Saxena, currently Secretary to Government of India in the Department of Rural Development has a PH.D. in forestry from Oxford. His books include, To the Hands of the Poor, *written jointly with Robert Chambers and Tushaar Shah,* India's Eucalyptus Craze, Farm forestry in South Asia, Forests, People and Profit, *and* The Saga of Participatory Forest Management in India. *He has taught and lectured on rural development and community forestry both in India and abroad. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex (U.K.), and at CIFOR, Indonesia.*

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■ CULTURE

Communication, Cinema, Development: From Morosity to Hope
By Gaston Roberge
This book is meant specially for students of communication departments with cinema studies in India. Cinema plays a vital role in the life of our people and hence the need for serious reflection on the link between communication, cinema and development.
Manohar, 1998, pp. 216, Rs. 450.00

■ GENERAL

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Donald Vanhowten
This book takes the wisdom from the ancient science of Ayurveda and combines it with a version of the western medical model and along with large portions of awareness, safety and support, adds practical visual techniques and passes this along to the reader.
Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, 1998, pp. 282, Rs. 250.00

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This radical new perspective of Ayurveda is not meant to replace what exists but to complement it. This is the approach mentioned by Charaka, the father of Ayurveda in his *Charaka Samhita.*
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Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 201, Rs. 225.00

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■ GENDER STUDIES

Feminist Foundations: Towards Transforming Sociology edited by Kristen B. Myees, Cynthia D.
Andersen and Barbara J. Risman
The edition have chosen articles that fall into what they consider the intellectual genres that compose feminist sociology. This collection differs because it is organized not on the basis of family, race and ethnicity or methods but on a vision of sociology as an integrated discipline in which feminist contributions have systematically influenced the whole discipline.
Sage Publications, 1998, pp. 439, cloth $46.00

Feminizing Political Discourse: Women and the Novel in India 1857–1905
Jasbir Jain
This book views literature as a cultural construct which reflects the socio-political concerns of the age. It focuses on the centrality of the women characters and connects it with the imperial-colonial encounter which placed Indian culture within effeminate constructs.
Rawat Publications, 1997, pp. 235, Rs. 350.00

■ HISTORY

Sinners and Saints: The Successors of Vasco Da Gama
Edited by Sanjay Subrahmanyam
Based on a collective work based on international collaboration between Indian, American, French and Portuguese scholars, this book reflects emerging trends in the study of Euro-Asian interaction in the Age of Discoveries and contributes to the study of early modern Indian Ocean trade, Portuguese colonialism and comparative early modern history.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 212, Rs. 350.00

Adventurers, Landowners and Rebels: Bengal c. 1575–c.1715
Aniruddha Roy
This monograph traces the courses of three revolts in Bengal between AD 1575 to 1715 and attempts to analyse the changing perceptions of these revolts in the nineteenth century discourses.
Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1998, pp. 273, Rs. 475.00

Political Prisoners in India
By Ujjaval Kumar Singh
Focussing on peaks of nationalist resistance against the colonial state and on the challenges of Communists and Naxalites to the state in independent India. This book explores a significant aspect of the relationship between the state and its subjects/citizens.
SOAS Studies on South Asia: Understanding and Perspectives Series, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 293, Rs. 475.00

The Mughal State 1526–1750
Edited by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam
A rich historiography on the Mughal state has long existed in Indian and European languages and debates have raged concerning its character and on the nature of its implications for the longer term trajectory of the subcontinent. This book brings together some of the key interventions in these debates.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 536, Rs. 595.00

■ LITERATURE

The Chosen
By David Ireland
An artist is commissioned to weave the portraits of a random selection of townsfolk in Lost River—enlightened, insane, fools, psychopaths, mindless materialists—by interviewing each one, fifty-two in all. One for every week of the year. A profound and witty vision of humanity by an Australian master-storyteller.
Secker and Warburg, 1998, pp. 520, £12.99

C.V. Raman Pillai. Translated from Malayam
By B.K. Menon
The first of a trilogy of historical novels on the royal family of the erstwhile state of Travancore by C.V.R.—the other two entitled Dharmaraja (1913) and Ramaraja Bahadur in two parts (1918–1920). A novel of contemporary political significance.
Sahitya Akademi, 1998, pp. 382, Rs. 150.00

Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India
Gauri Viswanathan
This book traces modern English studies to its colonial origin. The author argues that since the discipline of English literary studies developed in colonial times, the current challenges to the literary canon, both in India and elsewhere must take account of the role of empire in the creation of modern English studies.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 206, Rs. 225.00

Literary Theory and Criticism: Ruminations
Edited by A.P. Dani and V.M. Madge
This volume, published in honour of Dr. V.N. Dhavale a distinguished scholar and eminent teacher of English at Fergusson College, Pune covers in depth re-evaluations of the classical formulations by Plato and Aristotle, the role of analysis in literary criticism, the rise and persistence of feminism and post modernism, pedagogy of literary criticism in India etc.
Pencraft International, 1998, pp. 207, Rs. 350.00

■ SOCIOLOGY

Social Separatism: Scheduled Castes and the Caste System
Gnana Prakasam
The central argument of the book concerns the formation of the Satnami Sect, the transformation of the sect into a caste, the internal organization of the Satnami caste and its relationship with other castes.
Rawat Publications, 1998, pp. 318, Rs. 475.00

Global Transformations: Post-modernity and Beyond
Ananta Kumar Giri
In this book, the author argues that post-modernism despite its critical and deconstructive claim is still wedded to the deep structure of modernity and needs to be transcended.
Rawat publications, 1998, pp. 420, Rs. 675.00

■ PHILOSOPHY

The Later Foucault
Edited by Jeremy Moss
With an impressive interdisciplinary focus this book argues that one of the keys to understanding Foucault is his political thought. In this volume Foucault scholars and commentators on politics explore the significance of these last writings.
Sage Publications, 1998, pp. 201, £40.00

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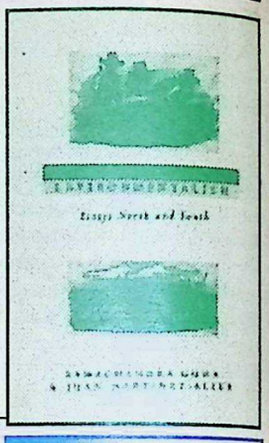
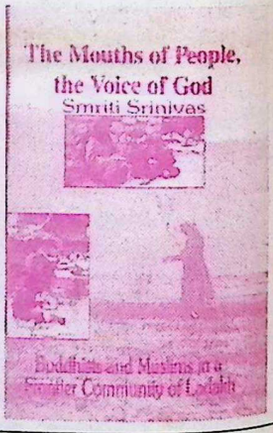


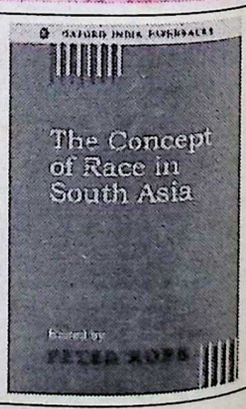
Varieties of Environmentalism
Essays North and South
Ramachandra Guha / Juan Martinez-Alier
In *Varieties of Environmentalism*, Guha and Martinez-Alier seek to articulate the values and orientation of the environmentalism of the poor, and to explore the conflicting priorities of South and North that were so dramatically highlighted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Essays on the 'ecology of Affluence' are also included.
0 19 564317 8 **1997** **215 x 140 mm** **256 pp.** **Rs 395**

Ecology, Climate and Empire: The Indian Legacy in Global Environmental History, 1400–1940
Richard Grove
This collection of essays from a pioneering scholar in the field of environmental history vividly demonstrates that concerns about climate change are far from being a uniquely modern phenomenon. Grove traces the origins of present-day environmental debates about soil erosion, deforestation and climate change in the writings of early colonial administrators, doctors and missionaries. He locates India in a global map and thereby transcends the methodological problem inherent in the field of environmental history: that of delineation of the scope of study.
0 19 564418 2 **1997** **215 x 140 mm** **250 pp.** **Rs 395**



The Mouths of People, the Voice of God:
Buddhists and Muslims in a Frontier Community of Ladakh
Smriti Srinivas
The Mouths of People, the Voice of God describes the Buddhist and Muslim communities in two villages in Ladakh. It is the first sociological and anthropological monograph of the Nubra valley. The book moves away from a geo-political and Tibetocentric view of the Himalayan border area and instead examines the region as a site of cross-cutting ties. It looks at the patterns of integration and exchange between the Buddhists and Muslims and tries to forge links between the study of language, politics and religion.
0 19 564229 5 **1997** **215 x 140 mm** **232 pp.** **Rs 425**

The Concept of Race in South Asia
Peter Robb
IN PAPERBACK NEW
This volume constitutes one of the first attempts to raise the question race comparatively and over a long time-span with regard to South Asia. The issues studied include South Asian equivalents of the concept of race, the nature of Western concepts as applied to India during colonial rule, and the origin and type of more recent variants. The essays in this volume engage with a vast and growing body of writings on such issues, embracing studies of the person, identity, civil society, ethnicity and nationalism.
0 19 564268 6 **1997** **215 x 140 mm** **268 pp.** **Rs 195**



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THE BOOK REVIEW

OCTOBER 1998

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Towards an Understanding of India's Ecumenical Encounters:

Playing Host to European Discoveries in the Pre-colonial Era

Lakshmi Subramanian

PORTUGUESE IN THE TAMIL COAST: HISTORICAL EXPLORATIONS IN COMMERCE AND CULTURE 1507–1749

By S. Jeyaseela Stephen

Navajothi, 1998, pp. 437, Rs. 400.00

SINNERS AND SAINTS: THE SUCCESSORS OF VASCO DA GAMA

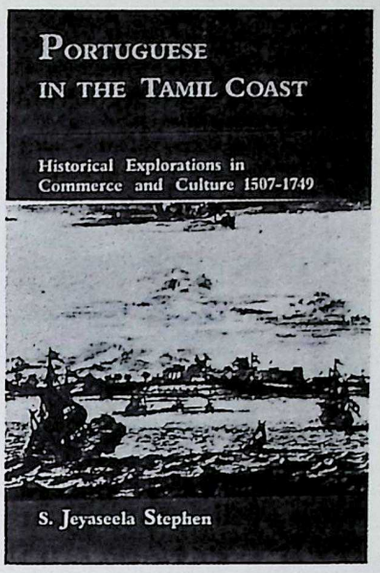
Edited by Sanjay Subrahmanyam

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 212, Rs. 350.00

EUROPEAN COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE IN PRE-COLONIAL INDIA: THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA

By Om Prakash

Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 377, Rs. 950.00



The books under review share one thing in common, an explicit concern with the working of Luso Indian enterprise with all its myriad dimensions and ramifications in South Asia in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Stephen and Om Prakash pursue the story of European encounters into the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the Portuguese were replaced by the Dutch and English East India Companies respectively. Subrahmanyam on the other hand prefers to draw attention to new methodological possibilities of 'biography as social history' and fresh approaches deriving from hermeneutics and textual criticism that have emerged in recent studies of Portuguese colonialism. The concern with European enterprise in South Asia during the age of discoveries might at first sight appear to be somewhat of an anachronism particularly after historians have spent years exploding the Euro centric bias in understanding Asia's maritime profile in the age of sail. A generation of scholars, Ashin Dasgupta, M.N. Pearson, Sinappah Arasaratnam, Meilink Roelofz among several others demonstrated the enduring strength and primacy of Asian/Indian maritime enterprise in the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and its capacity to deflect the aggression and hostility of European competition in the Indian seas. The impression, however, quickly disappears once we recognize that the European factor is essentially deployed as a reference point to understand, reconstruct and evaluate the trading milieu of the Indian merchant and the world view of his sovereign. This is particularly true of Om Prakash's work that synthesizes some of the most important and uptodate research on India's pre-colonial trade and seeks to understand the nature of the European presence in the subcontinent and the Indian ocean and its impact upon the Indian trading world and its operators. Stephen Jeyaseela, notwithstanding his impressive data base does not quite achieve the same results and slips inadvertently into stereotyped assumptions that he professes to contest.

Historical writings on Indo-European trade in the Indian Ocean have for long tended to fall into one of two categories. Following the intrepid civil servant turned historian W.H. Moreland, there emerged a substantial corpus of writing that stressed the significance of the European encounter ascribing to European enterprise an absolute superiority in the realm of shipping and export trade. The advent of the Europeans, the Portuguese and more so the Dutch and the Europeans was seen to displace Indian maritime activity especially in the realm of shipping and export. Europeans battled against odds to carve for themselves a preponderant position, and had to take on the capricious Indian State which hardly recognized notions of trade. Suddenly, historians using the same sources that Moreland had chanced upon, i.e., the official papers of the European East Indian Companies, claimed to rewrite the history of Maritime India without, however, moving away from the point of view of the European commercial factor. The result was that their analysis once again invariably emphasized the Europeans as senior partners of commercial enterprises and obscured the Indian merchant and misrepresented the Indian State's politics and assumptions. It was thus not entirely fortuitious that scholars stressed the arbitrary nature of the Mughal state's dealings with the European companies or that their accounts of sixteenth and seventeenth century Indian trade dealt with the haggling of European factors in Indian port towns and production centres and concentrated almost wholly on the Companies' trade with Europe. This approach was contested by a succeeding generation of historians like Ashin Dasgupta, M.N. Pearson, Genevieve Bouchon, A.R. Disney, Sanjay Subrahmanyam among others who used European sources more critically to upstage the faceless Asian merchant and map his terrain within the world system of the Indian Ocean. M.N. Pearson demonstrated the significance of the Gujarati carrying trade in spices and textiles within the Indian Ocean, that far exceeded in volume and value the trade in pepper between India and Europe on Portuguese Naos while drawing attention to the emergence of the unofficial Indo-Portuguese trading network in the Indian Ocean. Ashin Dasgupta's monograph on Surat captured the peaking of Indian maritime trade and activity in the western Indian Ocean in the latter decades of the seventeenth century and its collapse thereafter in the wake of the simultaneous decline of the Islamic empires of Mughal, Safaid and Ottoman power respectively. The new historiography questioned traditional and stereotypical assumptions about not just the marginality of Indian mercantile enterprise but about the attitude of the Indian State to merchants and their transactions. More recently we have had further innovative approaches to the study of European enterprise in India, by concentrating on personages like Vasco da Gama and the larger questions of myth building that constituted an integral part of the developing discourse on European power and presence in Asia.

Jeyaseela Stephens' work on the Portuguese in the Tamil Coast 1507-1749 would appear to fall into the second category, although he himself finds, for some inexplicable reason, Pearson's work Euro-centric! He also argues that the historiography of the Portuguese in the East especially in India developed unevenly with scholars concentrating more on the western littoral and the Arabian sea than the Bay of Bengal region, a gap that he addresses in his work on the Tamil coast, a region with a long and rich maritime tradition. Using a wide array of sources in Tamil, Portugeuse and English, Stephen reconstructs the network of sea-borne commerce and overland trade of the Tamil coast and its hinterland area in the fourteenth century prior to the advent of the Portuguese. The Portuguese intervention, particularly in the capacity of private enterprise was an important catalyst in energizing and activating trade centres in the region, like San Thome, Nagapatnam and Devanampatnam. The world of the Tamil merchant comes through forcefully in Stephen's narrative, replete with details on Arab settlements in Tamil coastal towns, the flourishing trade in textiles and pearls and the growth of Hindu Chetty enterprise. What is even more significant is the keen interest that potentates in peninsular India evinced in regulating and taxing trade, in marked contrast to political attitudes in coastal Gujarat. Both the rulers of Vijayanagar and the Nayaka chieftains who replaced them resisted the Portuguese when they attempted to displace established network of commerce and pilgrimage in the south eastern littoral particularly the pearl fishery coast with important centres at Kayal and Kilkarai. The development of alternate fishery centres like Punaiykayal largely under private Portuguese enterprise and the encouragement of client communities like the Paravas who were converted to Christianity enabled the Portuguese to enjoy the cutting edge in the control of rev-

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Sinners AND *Saints*
THE SUCCESSORS OF VASCO DA GAMA
EDITED BY *SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM*

enues from pearl fishery. The close interaction of the Portuguese with rival Muslim trading groups like the Marakhaiyars underscores the importance of the Portuguese presence in shaping segments of coastal society in peninsular India. At the same time, Stephen draws our attention to the role of the local rulers in the development of trade and commerce. The Nayaks of Gingee, Madurai and Tanjavur were directly interested in deriving revenues from commerce and closely monitored the activities of the Portuguese and their successors. It is, however, difficult to discern in their politics an explicit concern for their merchant subjects whose interests were often threatened by the Portuguese. In fact, the politics of the Tamil merchants remains elusive in Stephen's narrative notwithstanding the welter of details that are thrown up in his analysis of Portuguese commercial activities in the region.

The most impressive sections in the book relate to the ramifications of private Portuguese trade in the seventeenth century, even as the official Portuguese position was seriously dismantled by the Dutch and the English Companies and to the impact of the Portuguese presence on Tamil language and culture. The exigencies of commerce and conversions necessitated a closer acquaintance with the local languages, groups and cultures. We are told for instance that private Portuguese traders took pains to speak Tamil for the sake of conducting business transactions and that missionaries assumed responsibility for writing prayers in Tamil. The number of Portuguese loan words that made its way into Tamil testified to the vibrancy of the encounter, which went deeper than occasional commercial rivalry. With the conversion of an entire community of Paravas, the Portuguese were in a position to negotiate with local society more intimately. Jesuits like Roberto Nobili encouraged Tamil Christians to celebrate Pongal, the Tamil harvest festival and even to wear the sacred ash on their foreheads, practices that served to reinforce emergent syncretist tendencies.

The collection of essays edited by Sanjay Subrahmanyam attempts to survey the range of European historiography on Portuguese Asia and to identify some of the more recent interventions and methodological approaches through individual essays included in the volume. While the works of C.R. Boxer and Vitoriona Magalhaes Godinho studied the process of Portuguese expansion while attacking the myths revolving round it, the doyen of Portuguese studies, Luis Filipe Thomaz drew attention to the pre-history of Portuguese expansion and exploration in Asia and the changing character of its presence and participation in Asian trade in the sixteenth century. More recently, the emphasis would appear to have shifted to a biographical approach to the social history of Portuguese Asia, a project that is exemplified in the volume under review. The essays range from the tale of a Portuguese renegade in Bijapur to a Japanese convert who became a Catholic priest to a self-professed Lusitanian assassin. In the individual trajectory of the lies and pursuits of Portuguese actors in Asia is mirrored the more complex notions of diplomatic interchange, perceptions of power and of dignity in a new cultural context. Three essays stand out in the collection, the ones by Ines G. Zupanov, Maria Augusta Lima Cruz and by the editor Sanjay Subrahmanyam. In what appears an innocuously titled essay 'Notes on Portuguese relations with Vijayanagara, 1500–1565', Maria Augusta Lima Cruz comments on the complementarity of Portuguese-Vijayanagara relations, the structure of which was grounded in the Portuguese ordering of the universe. Studying a number of moments in diplomatic exchange between the Portuguese officials and the rulers of Vijayanagara, she argues that the cordiality of diplomatic interaction was possible not only because they were not in real competition or conflict but also because of an ideological construct that saw Gentiles or Hindus as potential grist for the conversion mill and the Islamic expansion was a favourable site for cordial communication. Admittedly, competing self interests cut into such received notions and it was not before the Portuguese stabilized their power in Goa and the Vijayanagara rayas looked southwards for expansion that diplomatic interchanges assumed real meaning.

What is interesting about Cruz's essay is the roles played by individual missionaries, soldiers and merchants in the establishment and consolidation of Vijayanagar's political power and the inroads they could thereby make in situations of cultural exchange and dialogue. Thus Cristavaode Figueredo who lodged on the main streets in the inland capital with Portuguese gunners played a decisive role in the victory of Krishna Deva Raya over Ismail Adil Shah in 1520 and by his action invested an altogether new dimension to existing diplomatic relations. Of an altogether different order was the pretensions of Dom Francisco da Gama(1535-62), twice Viceroy of Goa(1597-1600, 1622-28) who intervened in Deccan politics at a time when the Mughals were stepping up their offensive against the Sultanates of Ahmedanagar and Bijapur. After the 1580's Bijapur no longer constituted a threat to Portuguese enterprise. The only stumbling bloc was the Sultan Ibrahmi Adil Shah II who was perceived as a coward in relation to the Mughals. In the Mughal camp, there was the usual discord and division between Prince Murad who had been given charge of expansion into the Deccan by Akbar and the more seasoned courtiers like Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan. Things reached a crisis point in 1599 when, according to Abul Fazl, Murad was consumed by a sense of failure and gave in to excessive drinking and died suffering violent convulsions. The Portuguese Viceroy who was not unaware of the division in the Mughal camp claimed in a letter written on 18 December 1599 that he had with the help of occult caused Murad's death and thus taken off the Mughal pressure from the Deccan. Whether or not the Dom caused Murad's death can never be known. What is interesting as Subrahmanyam points out is the Viceroy's claims of authorship for a crime that he may not have actually committed reveals a set of moral assumptions that informed Portuguese relations with the Mughals and set the tone for their political behaviour.

In stark contrast to the self professed villainy of the Viceroy, was the hagiography of the Portuguese missionaries turned saints, whose lives were retold and resurrected to legitimize the efforts and presence of the Jesuit missionaries in overseas provinces. The persona of Francis Xaiver was a special one in this regard as Ines Zupanov points out in her essay. Making a Portuguese saint out of a Spanish missionary, she says, was a difficult feat and thus it was that a genre of Christian

A generation of scholars, Ashin Dasgupta, M.N. Pearson, Sinappah Arasaratnam, Meilink Roelofz among several others demonstrated the enduring strength and primacy of Asian/Indian maritime enterprise in the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and its capacity to deflect the aggression and hositility of European competition in the Indian seas. The impression, however, quickly disappears once we recognize that the European factor is essentially deployed as a reference point to understand, reconstruct and evaluate the trading milieu of the Indian merchant and the world view of his sovereign.

histories emerged to emphasize and reinforce the progressive manifestation of Portuguese glory in Asia in the sixteenth century, the age of triumph. All the predictable attributes of sainthood like providence, clairvoyance, prophecies, miracle making prowess were carefully put together by Sebastiao Goncalves in his manuscript *Historia fos Religios da Cmpanhia de Jesus* which became a blueprint for later histories to follow. In Zupanov's own words, the 'Historia is an excellent literary crystallization of the perception of a collective conscience. . . (it) fuelled a millenerian sensitivity which conferred an aura of legitimacy to "hagiographical" efforts in all Portuguese historical texts'. Taken together, the volume demonstrates the immense possibilities of adopting a biographical approach to social history and is a fitting tribute to earlier pioneering efforts by C.R. Boxer.

Om Prakash's study of European commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India is an extensively researched work that analyses the trading operations of European corporate enterprises such as the English and Dutch East India Companies and those of the private traders and relates them to the role in the world economy or the relative scale of Asia operations in the Indian Occean. Om Prakash comments on the pioneering role of the Europeans in breaking down technological barriers and thereby affecting a transport revolution that commenced with the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope. South

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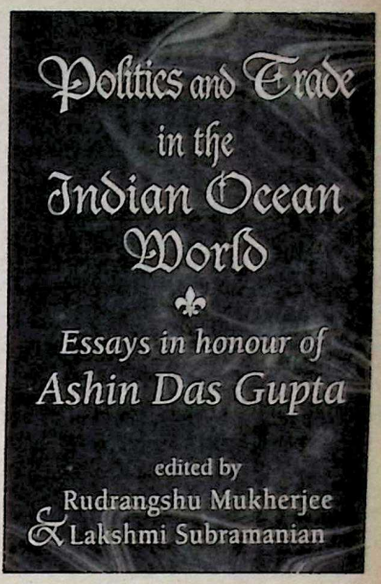
Merchants, the Port and the Ocean

Kanakalatha Mukund

POLITICS AND TRADE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD
ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF ASHIN DAS GUPTA

By Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Lakshmi Subramanian

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. viii+281, Rs. 425.00



This review gives me an opportunity to express my great admiration for Ashin Das Gupta as a historian and story teller. When I first read his work, as a Ph.D. student, he brought alive for me the commercial and political world of the Surat merchants. This made such a vivid impression that I would often forget that I was reading about events which had happened more than two hundred years ago. It was also a practical lesson that one could be a scholar without sacrificing elegance of language or simplicity of style. Though I did not know him personally (I met him only once at a seminar), I can honestly say that his death has left me with a sense of personal loss.

Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Lakshmi Subramanian, two of Das Gupta's students, have brought out this volume of essays in his honour, essays which further explore Das Gupta's own research interests which extended to merchants, the port and the ocean. The articles look at trade and traders in various regions of India during the eighteenth century, generally understood to be a century of turmoil and transition, at inland regimes, and at Indian Ocean trade in a broader canvas, P.J. Marshall's article on Burke does not fit into this general thematic framework, but has been included as an expression of Das Gupta's own interest in Burke, and his close friendship with Marshall.

The book begins with a brief overview of all the papers and a tribute to Das Gupta by Mukherjee. The first article in the book is by Bhaswati Bhattacharya, who gives an account of the Coromandel region in the late eighteenth century. Bhattacharya's main argument is that though this was a period of great political uncertainty, this did not lead to a disruption of all trade and production throughout the region. Many production centres continued to be active, and many new market centres came up on the coast and in the hinterland so that trade networks continued to function. In the northern Coromandel after the Mughal conquest of Golkonda, the rise of local Telugu leaders and the shift in the balance of political power had disrupted the local economy and textile production. However, Bhattacharya points out, there was an economic revival in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Masulipatnam continued to be an important port in coastal trade, with extensive shipping to the ports of southern Coromandel and Bengal. The port also had an extensive trade with the hinterland and the capital city, Hyderabad. However, once again in the 1760s, the region was destabilised due to political uncertainties, and inland trade—especially the trade carried on by the *banjaras*, suffered due to the exaction of excessive customs duties. The most important pattern of trade was the overland trade in cotton which was brought to Masulipatnam to be shipped to Bengal and other regions, and the return cargo in silk from Bengal which was then transported inland. This trade particularly suffered when the coastal region came under the French and the English. However, Bhattacharya points out, an alternative route came up further up north, linking the Deccan and Bengal via Nagpur and Mirzapur, ensuring the flow of cotton to Bengal and of silk to western India. In the southern Coromandel also, many inland trade centres were subjected to frequent plunder during the Maratha invasions. Nevertheless, several new centres like Walajapet, Hindupur and Nagar became important in inland trade, in effect minimising the economic downturn experienced by the older, more traditional market towns.

While this captures the changing scenario at a particular point of time in the history of the region, I wonder whether Bhattacharya's article adds to our understanding of larger historical dynamics. Localized political turmoil and the consequent downturn in economic activity was a common feature of the landscape of pre-modern India. Artisans, merchants and agriculturists would uproot themselves and settle in a more stable region when threatened with wars, famines, unreasonable tax demands or any other disruption to their normal life. Coastal settlements would be abandoned and new ports would come up. This was particularly true in the Coromandel region which had almost no natural harbours. Why then is this such a surprise if the same pattern was repeated in the eighteenth century?

The politics of the subjection of Indian weavers and merchants to the authority of the English East India Company in eighteenth-century Surat is studied by Lakshmi Subramanian. In various textile producing regions of India, the English effectively edged the Indian merchants out of their textile procurement, and began to make contracts directly with the weavers, thus 'bypassing the strong vertical link that existed between marketing and industrial production in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.' While this process itself was repeated in Bengal, Coromandel and Gujarat, what Subramanian stresses in this carefully structured article is that the regional variations and location-specific factors need to be understood. Subramanian looks at the organization of textile production and the underlying tensions within the weaving community on the one hand, and the gradual changes in the power structure of Surat on the other. The fact that there was a steady and even growing demand from west Asia for the textiles of Gujarat gave the merchants and weavers a greater bargaining strength against the English, and helped them to negotiate for better terms and conditions. (It may be worthwhile to remark here that this was not unique to Gujarat. In the Coromandel also, merchants and weavers were able to get higher prices from the English in the mid-eighteenth century because of the greatly increased demand for the local textiles.) The English were able to achieve the desired control over the weavers and merchants only at the beginning of the nineteenth cen-

Asia's pivotal position lay in her ability to put in the world market large quantities of relatively inexpensive and highly competitive manufactured goods. In turn, she absorbed an immense amount of New World silver. The Euro-Asian relationship was one of mutual advantage until the mid-eighteenth century when terms of trade changed and India became a market for goods produced in Manchester. What is impressive about Om Prakash's work is not just the wealth of detail and archival richness, but the approach that almost convinces the reader of the virtues of the much maligned monster of euro-centrism. For instance, while endorsing the marginality of the Portuguese impact on the trading structure within the Indian Ocean, he draws attention to recent interventions that modify received notions of Portuguese investment and commercial activity. We are told that the Portuguese imports has been vastly underestimated. Also the enduring importance of the Levantine trade, taken as a marker to play down the significance of Portuguese commerce was directly related to the spice market in West Asia and did not compete with Portuguese trade.

The seventeenth century was witness to the expanding commerce of the English and Dutch East India Companies whose participation in the country trade of the Ocean assumed significant proportions. Drawing from his own researches in Bengal, Om Prakash argues that the increase in the output of export goods was achieved through a reallocation of resources and existing productive capacity. The responsiveness of the market was reflected in rising price trends, with its attendant advantages trickling down to intermediary merchant groups, as well as weavers and primary producers. The situation changed dramatically in the century of crisis leaving India drained of silver, the merchant exposed to political pressure and the primary producer forced to leave his occupation. The crisis of the eighteenth century is brought out with clarity as the nature of the Euro-Asian relationship entered a new phase of conflict.

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tury, when their political power in the region also became paramount.

Ruchira Banerjee explores the resurgence of the power of the Ali Raja, the Mappila chieftain of Cannanore in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the struggle between the Ali Rajas and the English at Tellicherry to control the trade of Malabar. The Ali Rajas of Cannanore were descended from a Nair prince of Kolattiri who converted to Islam in the eleventh to twelfth century. While Hindu Nairs looked down on trade, the Ali Rajas of Cannanore could achieve great success in trade while also retaining some of the authority of the Nair nobility. Theirs, however, was a complex and unstable sphere of influence. In the 1720s, the English at Tellicherry began to side with the Chirakkal Nairs, the most most powerful faction among the Kolattiri aristocrats, and there was a long drawn-out conflict between them and the Ali Rajas. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, their fortunes again revived under Ali Raja Kunhi Amsi, who allied himself with Hyder Ali and was formally proclaimed the ruler of the Mappilas in 1766. In 1771, in order to emphasize his great power and wealth, he celebrated the wedding of his niece with great pomp, and Mappilas from all parts of Malabar paid their respects to him by attending the wedding. Sadly, this phase of dominant power was short-lived, and by 1780, their power base had become sadly eroded.

This is the story that Banerjee relates, with detailed explanations about the relationship between the Mappilas and the Ali Rajas, the nature of internal trade and overseas markets, and the European interest in the Malabar region for their requirements of pepper. Unfortunately, her narrative skills fail to match the requirements of this complex history, and the end product is often disjointed and jumpy. Names of persons (like someone she refers to as 'the Rodrigues') and events are mentioned without context or background. For instance, she first mentions the intervention by the English at Tellicherry "who pretended to act sanctimoniously" (whatever that means) and supported the Chirakkal Raja in 1722 in his conflict with the Ali Raja on p. 91, and again returns to this five pages later. Such discontinuities make for difficult reading, and the story suffers in the telling.

The longest article in the book is by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. It traces the history of Arcot from 1700 to 1732 after the region of central Coromandel came under Mughal rule, and Arcot became the capital of the Nawab. The authors argue that the first two Mughal governors/rulers/Nawabs of the region, Daud Khan and his successor Saadatullah Khan, were keen to develop new ports on the Coromandel coast to challenge the economic power of the Europeans, and they also developed Arcot as a major centre of inland trade. They point to the role played by north Indian communities in the local economy and finances, notably the Khatris, Gujaratis and Kayasthas. Finally, they "argue that the 1730s mark a turning point... for it is now that the balance between the *nizamat* and European (English and French) political power turns unfavourabale to the former, eventually leading to the widespread fiscal crisis that gripped states in Tamilnadu in the latter half of the eighteenth century."

The history of the 'Karnatak Payanghat' region from the seventeenth century is outlined carefully with details about the financial resources of the region, which give much depth to the analysis. (The authors may be unhappy that some of this careful work is undone by a misprint in the table total on p. 120). This is followed by an account of the rise of Arcot, and its formidable Nawab Saadatullah Khan. The article is remarkable for its use of sources from various languages. In spite of the observations of the authors about the use of European versus indigenous sources [see excerpt], this is the *only* piece in the entire book which uses Persian and, to a limited extent, Tamil sources, in addition to Dutch, English and French sources, which adds great depth to the piece.

The authors are also very cautious in not claiming the status of a 'stable successor state' for Arcot, but it nevertheless does seem that this is an implicit argument of the whole work. This is the point that I would like to question at some length, since this involves a question of methodology. In history, as in all social sciences, inferences and conclusions are very sensitive to the assumptions and parameters set out. Here, by stopping the chronicle in 1732, at the death of Saadatullah Khan, the authors are able to conclude, however tentatively, about the nature of the state of Arcot. Yet, even by 1736, there were complaints that the local coinage, the gold pagoda, was being debased and devalued, and in 1741, the English began to issue the 'star' pagoda, which soon became the accepted currency in the Coromandel region. Further, even during Saadatullah Khan's time, there are several references that leading persons of Arcot would send their families and money to Madras for safety whenever there was a threat of invasion or other upheaval. The 1740s marked a time of prolonged disruptions caused by the Maratha invasions, when there was severe dislocation of economic life, and people. Thus, within ten years of the Nawab's death, the state of Arcot could neither protect the value of its currency, nor effectively provide security and safety to its subjects in the face of external threat. And, it must be pointed out, that none of these could be attributed to the pernicious influence of the Europeans. Subrahmanyam also adds some typical touches in this paper by giving his own versions of the spelling of various place names—Kadalur (Cuddalore), Sao Tome (San Thome), Naguru (Nagore)—and of the Venetian traveller Manucci (Manuzzi in the text).

Four shorter papers explore the world of Indian Ocean trade. Om Prakash clearly spells out the outlines of his study of the trade of European companies in Asia—first, to establish the centrality of India in intra-Asian as well as Euro-Asian trade, and second, to examine the political and economic environment in which Europeans functioned in different parts of Asia. For the latter, he takes up the functioning of the Dutch East India Company in the Indonesian archipelago, where they were able to exercise monopoly control over trade and spice production, and contrasts this with the situation in Japan, where the Japanese state completely controlled all foreign trade.

Kenneth McPherson and S. Arasaratnam explore more or less a common theme—trade in the Bay of Bengal. McPherson stresses the forces of continuity and change in the Bay of Bengal trade—the former exemplified by the sustained importance of *Chulia* (Tamil Muslim) and *kling* (Hindus from the Coromandel) merchants in maritime trade even after the arrival of the Portuguese, while the force of change is seen in the extensive trading activities of the Portuguese on the Coromandel coast, which has been overshadowed in historical writings by the pre-occupation with the activities of the Dutch and English companies: Portuguese merchants continued to be an important group in Madras down to the eighteenth century, and were found in great numbers all over the East coast. He also traces the changes which took place in the Bay of Bengal region after the arrival of the Dutch and English, in particular.

Arasaratnam stresses that the trade of eastern India was oriented very strongly towards the East. He concentrates more on the rise and fall of various ports in southeast Asia, and shows how, whenever political uncertainities in any port region made trading conditions difficult, maritime traders would shift to other ports. Thus when Acheh became unattractive, Tennasserim and Johore became important, and this rise and fall of ports in the maritime trade of the region continued in a cyclical pattern. On the Coromandel coast Masulipatnam lost ground as the major port and gave way to Madras and other ports in the southern Coromandel. In the eighteenth century, the trade of Bengal to Acheh declined sharply, while the trade to Surat and West Asia became more important. Both pieces are relatively short, and neither really takes the reader into uncharted realms. McPherson's essay which is based only on secondary works seems especially one-dimensional.

Pearson's essay on Indians in East Africa is both unusual and thought-provoking. He argues against the glib assumption that because the products of India were of central importance in the trade and economy of East Africa—a fact which is well-documented—this also meant that there was a strong presence of Indians (especially Gujaratis) in the region. A further inference is that these Indians controlled local trade and finances. As Pearson points out, the available evidence just does not support this conclusion. Pearson then takes us carefully through the historical material available after the arrival of the Portuguese to outline the trade and activities of various groups from western India in East Africa. I only wish that more students would be as careful in drawing inferences from the information and data available to them. The last piece is about Edmund Burke's vision of a more benevolent and humane empire. Marshall also highlights how the perceptions about Burke changed in India as the priorities for men of affairs and scholars also changed over time.

It is always tricky to review a collection of articles, since individual contribution usually vary in quality and readability. This book is no exception to this, although it must be said that the variations across pieces is much less than is usually found in such edited volumes. I found it a little disappointing that with one or two exceptions almost no essay has really ventured into new approaches to the dynamics of trade and politics in Indian history. On the other hand, a great deal more information has been added which strengthens our understanding of these processes in different regions in India and in Indian Ocean trade, and that is a positive contribution.

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When Clio Wore a Smile

Ashin Das Gupta (1932–1998)

Sanjay Subrahmanyam

Ashin Das Gupta, who died in Calcutta on 4 June 1998, after a protracted illness that occupied much of the 1990s, was a historian who stood alone, in more senses than one, in the firmament of Indian history. To compare Indian history to a firmament is probably a dubious idea, for it does remain even today a pool with "shallow, yet extensive waters" as Tapan Raychaudhuri once called it in the mid 1960s. Ashin was a solitary figure in an intellectual sense, for although he virtually founded a field—namely that of Indian Ocean studies between 1500 and 1800—he explored it in a way that was all his own. He had a number of students in Calcutta and Santiniketan, some of whom followed his lead in studying early modern port-cities and coastal regions, but most of them steered clear (and this was surely wise) of trying to imitate their teacher. Ashin Das Gupta too did not imitate his teacher, the hard-working Narendra Krishna Sinha, who was a noted historian of the eighteenth century, but a writer whom one usually reads as a chore. I read his three volumes on the economic history of Bengal as a student, and I can recall having great difficulty keeping my eyes open at the Ratan Tata Library. Not so when one read Ashin. If Indian history in the 1960s and 1970s had a stylist, it was him. Anyone who goes back and reads even the very brief piece he wrote in the festschrift for Charles Boxer (a ten-page essay entitled "Pieter Phoonsen of Surat, c. 1730–1740", *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. XXII, no. 3, 1988) will see exactly what I mean. This is a rollicking tale of a Dutch factor, who was accused of embezzlement, and whose bastard son then managed to raise a good part of the city of Surat against his father's employers, the Dutch East Indian Company. Between the father and the son, and sundry other characters (who between bouts of drink, discuss Manichaean questions), the reader scarcely realizes that a subtle message has been successfully communicated to him. The message is the following: whatever they claimed in their official letters, the employees of the East India companies had unofficial (and often underhand) dealings with one another, as well as with Asian traders and brokers. Historians who read Company documents at their face value were making a grave error, and were also demonstrating an inability to penetrate the complex webs of sociability that eventually enabled Phoonsen to flee Surat for English protection in Bombay.

This little piece is a nice point of entry into many of Ashin Das Gupta's lasting preoccupations. From the time when he published *Malabar in Asian Trade*, 1740–1800 (Cambridge, 1967), and—as he elegantly if too-modestly put it—transformed an "arid dissertation into a vulnerable book", Ashin defined what were for him the key axes around which his preoccupations as a historian would revolve. First, he decided to focus on a certain type of merchant located in a port city as the central object of his attention. This was the type of character he called the "maritime merchant", or less felicitously "the medieval maritime merchant". Maritime history was, in his view, the study of the world of the maritime merchant, and not the study of caulking, and laying keels, or biscuits and provisions. Ashin was not the sort of historian who cared about long-term series on sailor's wages, or the fine points of how sails fitted on masts. For him, as for Lewis Carroll's characters, the bowsprit got mixed up with the rudder sometimes. But that mattered little, as he did not belong to the Army and Navy Club anyway.

Malabar in Asian Trade was about the transformation in the relationship between maritime trade and politics in Kerala at the time when the Travancore kingdom was ruled by Martanda Varma and Rama Varma, and when Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan extended their reach into the south-west coast. But its focus was less on these grand political figures than on the Saraswat merchants of the port-towns, or on figures like Ezekiel Rahabi, the Cochin-based Jewish merchant who for a time even rubbed shoulders with the princes of his time. To understand the history of the Rahabis, Ashin realized that he had to go beyond Indian history, and acquire some knowledge of the history of trans-national trading groups. In that, he was aided by Walter Fischel, who with Shlomo Goitein was one of the leading specialists of the time on medieval Jewish trade. Later, while working on Surat and the Red Sea, he had extensive discussions with Robert Bertram Serjeant, the eccentric English specialist on the Hadramaut. To understand India, Ashin Das Gupta has written somewhere, you have to go beyond India.

This first book also defined two other tenets that he lived by. The first was that history had to have a human face, and needed to be peopled with characters rather than numbers and figures (as the economic history that was fashionable in the 1960s proposed). He often gravitated therefore to using biography, much before biography came back into fashion after its eclipse under the onslaught of the philistine disciples of E.H. Carr. The second idea, which went together with the first, was that history had to be constructed as a narrative, and once more Ashin was oblivious to the fashions that so exercised the likes of Lawrence Stone. The question nevertheless remained of what sort of narrative. Hayden White has reminded us in recent times that various modes of "emplotment" have been favoured by differing historians from the nineteenth century on. Others have analyzed the manner in which Fernand Braudel, also a maritime historian after his own manner, constructed his narratives, using flashy literary effects while claiming to eschew them, and refining a tradition that went back to Michelet in the nineteenth century. Braudel was a romantic in many respects, and he often spoke and wrote of "loving" the Mediterranean. Perhaps this was just affectation on his part, since he might have thought his image as a Frenchman imposed that sort of vocabulary of emotion on him. Ashin never spoke of loving the Indian Ocean, or even the Arabian Sea. Instead, he chose the ironic mode of emplotment, in White's rebarbative vocabulary, and raised it to a fine art. He developed it at length in the manuscript that became his most important book, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, 1700–1750*, and cast it as a pearl before the swine of the academic book-trade. Predictably, they turned it down, and the rumours I heard in the early 1980s (which I never confirmed directly with Ashin) were that this was because he eschewed the bogus "social-scientese" of the time. His attitude was summed up when he once wrote, reviewing a book by Frank Conlon, that a working historian had to "accept his theme with its real imprecisions rather than chase an Absolute in the garb of a social scientist".

Ashin was of course no Marxist, and he had a horror of the mechanistic pretensions of some of that tribe. Of Weberians, he had a more tolerant view, as we see from his reception of Michael Pearson's *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat* (1976). But consider the following review by him of Surendra Gopal's *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat*, a pristine product of Soviet-style Marxism:

> Gujarat's trade and Gujarati crafts are important subjects for the historian, and they are important in their own rights. But I suppose not even the mature scholarship of Surendra Gopal could withstand the sub-title: "A Study in the Impact of European Expansion on Pre-capitalist Economy", which is dutifully inscribed on the front page, but fortunately fails to make the cover of the book" (*Indian Historical Review*, Vol. II, No. 1, 1976, pp. 460–61).

Those who read Ashin's *Decline of Surat* book for various academic presses seem to have rather missed the point. They apparently thought that the book was merely telling a "story" (as indeed it was), and that such stories were passé. What was one to do with a book that retailed at length the story of a Bohra magnate called Mulla Abdul Ghafur, who controlled a large part of Surat's maritime trade in about 1700? What was one to make of the manner in which Surat's decline was traced, by comparing Abdul Ghafur to his grandson Mulla Muhammad Ali, who tried to build a political constituency in the 1730s, failed miserably, and eventually died (or committed suicide) in prison? Mystified by these conundrums, academic presses allowed the manuscript to wander from

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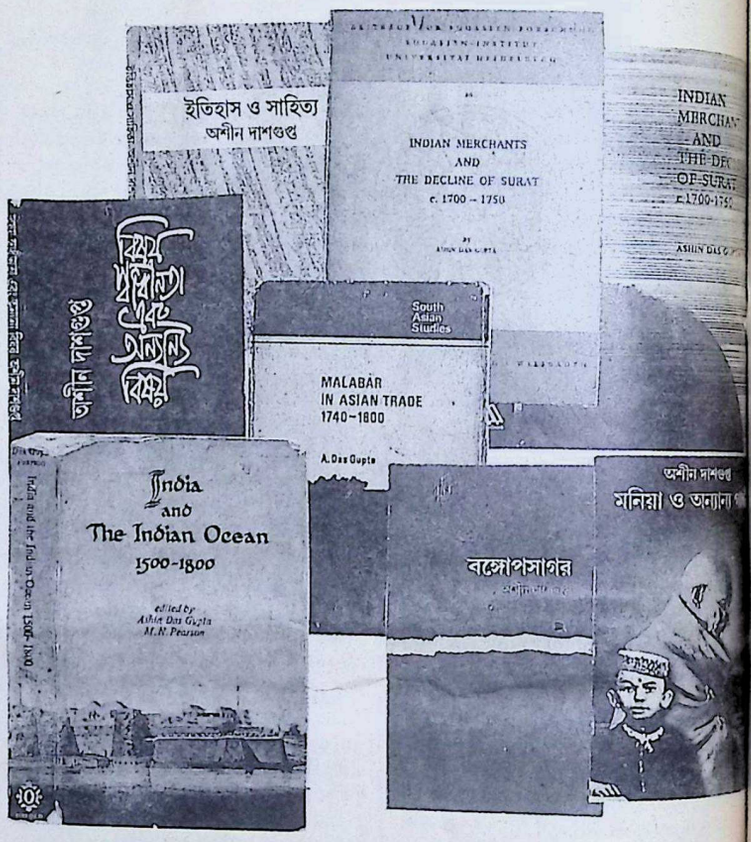
History, Literature and the Individual

The Bengali Writings of Ashin Das Gupta

Kunal Chakrabarti



Those who are familiar with the English writings of Ashin Das Gupta know him as one of the foremost historians of maritime trade of late medieval India. But his intellectual concerns were so rich and varied that these could not be contained within the narrow confines of trade history alone. He chose to express these in his essays written in Bengali which are almost as extensive in corpus as his English works. Since English has a far wider reach than the regional languages of India, it is tempting to present one's ideas in English, particularly for those who are equally comfortable in both English and the vernacular. Yet, from the mid-nineteenth century, Bengal developed a tradition of encouraging some of its best minds to publish at least a part of their intellectual output in Bengali. A number of major historians have consequently published a good deal of their original research in Bengali before and along with Ashin Das Gupta. However, while in most cases the difference lies merely in the medium of expression and not in the contents, the questions that Ashin Das Gupta addressed and the manner in which he treated these in Bengali are fundamentally different from those he dealt with in English. It is impossible not to recognize the historian and stylist even in his Bengali writings—the academic precision and rigour, the compelling logic, the elegant prose and the acerbic wit are inescapable—but the themes, immediate in their significance but enduring in values, and the approach close to his heart, are different. His more personal Bengali writings complement the works of the professional historian, and the two together reveal the thinker that he was. Indeed, Dasgupta delivered two memorial lectures in Bengali on the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea (AD 1500–1800), which have since been published as pamphlets, and a monograph on the history of Indian coasts (*Upakuler Itihas*) is ready for publication. But these are

one place to another, until it found a home in 1979 with the South Asian Institute's series at Heidelberg. Since Franz Steiner Verlag from Wiesbaden (the publishers of that series), are hardly a household name in South Asia, the book remained a confidential publication, a status from which even its recent reprinting in New Delhi has not entirely rescued it. Meanwhile, readers and presses were busy lapping up what Ashin himself once called the work of "sophisticated practitioners examin(ing) the impact of whatever-it-is on whatever-there-was".

In the 1980s, things changed somewhat. The Surat book was, interestingly enough, given a favourable reception at Aligarh, since Ashin seemed to have aligned himself with the angels in the Battle of the Eighteenth Century. His other methodological sins and transgressions were forgiven. Some of his propositions, on the excessive emphasis on what he called "the growth-oriented impact of European trading" seemed to have him aligned against such writers as K.N. Chaudhuri and Om Prakash. Whatever their disagreements, his relations with fellow-users of the archives of the European companies remained courteous. But Ashin was notoriously sceptical about number crunching in the European archives, an attitude that he sometimes carried from healthy scepticism to outright and outrageous affectation. Even so, he could be very amusing on the issue, as he was while reviewing Om Prakash Singh's *Surat and its Trade in the Second Half of the 17th Century*.

> There is an appealing lack of pretention about Dr. Om Prakash Singh and an old-world courtesy towards witnesses, long dead, which makes one nostalgic (. . .). Why do we not write history like this any longer? This is a question of some importance and Dr. Singh's book, apart from its usefulness as a handy collection, may well serve as an occasion for a necessary discussion. The first reason that I know is that witnesses even in the English Factory tell lies. They do so partly because they do not know and they do not understand, and partly because they are liars. This is sad but demonstrable" (*The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XV, No. 3, 1978, pp. 415–16).

This left him in a bit of a dilemma though, since most of Ashin's work itself was based on the Dutch and the English archives. His solution was to argue, as he did frequently and with conviction, that "even if it is European documentation we read, the European was not a particularly important person in Indian maritime trade till he began effectively to beat up the natives. Spectacular, yes. Significant in his own way, certainly. The dominating presence, no". The point then, which was carried over into the book he jointly edited with Michael Pearson, titled *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1987), was that there was no "Vasco da Gama epoch" in Indian maritime history that was inaugurated in 1500. The period between 1500 and about 1750 was, for Ashin Das Gupta, a phase which was adequately defined by what he termed "Van Leur's position that Europeans adjusted to Indian and Asian tradition before they took political power".

There were a number of other myths that Ashin helped demolish, including that of the Mughal state as an Oriental despotism, "monopolizing trades at the drop of a hat, fleecing merchants at breakfast, and generally carrying on as a public nuisance. . .", as he wrote in a review of Sushil Chaudhuri's first book (*IHR*, Vol. IV, no. 2, 1978, p. 510). Unfortunately, one has the impression from time to time that these are myths that persist, because so many of our colleagues do not read. At a conference in Calicut in May 1998, listeners were treated to speaker after speaker repeating shibboleths about European dominance in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of a sort that would have made even W.H. Moreland blush. The speakers were, interestingly, not imperialists wishing to place Europeans centre-stage, but nationalists and Third World-wallahs, claiming in heart-rending tones that total European domination of the Indian Ocean began on the day Vasco da Gama set foot on Indian soil and ate his first jackfruit.

Manifestly, none of them had read Ashin Das Gupta, though some actually paid lip service to his writings. I was annoyed, but then thought of Ashin. If he had been there, and been well enough to respond, he would have opened his eyes wide in that innocent way of his, and demolished them with an ironic and well-turned phrase. Now that he is gone, those of us who followed his work are left with a task that is beyond our collective capacities, for we'll never match that lightness of touch or delicacy of expression. But we can still smile when we think of Ashin.

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extensions of his English writings, a summing up of his life-work on India's maritime trade which he had undertaken to write in Bengali out of his commitment to the cause of education through the mother tongue. It is the same commitment which made him accept the general editorship of the open-ended history series in Bengali (*Itihas Granthamala*) that the Ananda Publishers are bringing out in volumes. I will leave these out of the present discussion and will concentrate only on those writings which are without—because they do not require—footnotes.

The first Bengali book of Ashin Dasgupta (*Itihas O Sahitya*, Calcutta, 1989) deals with the relationship between history and creative literature. He was an avid reader of literature and believed that the two subjects are closely allied in that both construct plausible narratives through reasonable speculation in their own respective ways. However, while history is circumscribed by insufficiency of available information, not all of which can be admitted as evidence, literature enjoys the freedom to indulge in unrestrained imagination. Still, his fondness for 'stories' and aversion to quantification of data are well-known, for he believed that the application of preconceived notions or statistical formulae can be reductive and would displace the multi-dimensional, contradiction-ridden human protagonists from the focal point of historical investigation. That is why, even in his more conventional writings on maritime trade, he preferred to adopt the biographical mode and arranged all his data around the activities of a few key players. His anxiety to preserve the human face of history made him, rely on literary form which, he believed, would sensitise the historian and compensate for the inadequacies intrinsic to the discipline. Given the constraints, how to conceive of and accommodate the individual within the historical narrative has been one of the prime quests of Ashin Das Gupta, and it pervades all his Bengali writings in one way or the other.

Dasgupta begins this book with his definition of history as analysis of human societies of the past based on reliable evidence. The emphasis, he says, has to be on society, for history cannot capture the life of an individual who is lived by himself. Such an individual exists, but he has no history. Only when he is located in the complex web of social networks does he become a subject of history. It is this individual, socially related and yet lonely in his privacy, that the historian ideally attempts to figure out. But he is at a loss if this individual happens to be a common man, for very little can be known about him. On the other hand, if the individual is treated as part of a human collective, his identity tends to get submerged in a crowd. The crowd in its turn resolutely defies the attempt of the historian to locate in it the individual. This is the insuperable dilemma that the historian perpetually confronts. An imaginative and diligent researcher may discover in the police files the story of a young girl who came to Paris from her village in the 1790s and the eventually drowned in the Seine, but this event in itself does not become history till such time as it is shown that she was an accidental victim of the revolution and that this conclusion is generalisable. Thus an individual must belong to a place and time which characterise his thoughts and actions and simultaneously be a part of a larger process which transforms the insignificance of his personal life.

Some problems still remain. The thoughts of this common man are not exactly his own but a reflection of a collective mentality, at least in some ways typical of his place and time. His private thoughts, though valuable, are often unattainable and in any case unusable in history. If he is a distinguished person, history grants him his thoughts, but these are relevant only in so far as they helped to mould the thoughts of others. In other words, history concerns itself with ideas and not with emotions. The making of a genius is beyond the purview of history. For instance, history cannot explain why Gautama became the Buddha. Gautama Buddha earned his place in history not because he attained wisdom but because he ignored his personal salvation for the sake of his fellow human beings. Thus history can afford to study only the man in society. But the problem is, the same man is both social and insular at different points in time of his life. As there can be no history without the social man, there is no history of the man in isolation of his surroundings. We meet this lonely individual only in literature.

The weakness of history is also the source of its greatest strength—it is completely dependent on facts. However, the task of the historian does not end with the discovery and selection of facts. He also attempts, through judicious presentation of these facts to analyse the lives of men in society. When he arranges his facts in an orderly sequence to construct an argument he is a scientist by temperament. But since the facts at his disposal are limited and analysis of life is arduous, the historian, in empathy with his subject, takes a few liberties. In this, he is close to a litterateur. It is now universally recognized that the 'truth' of history is not unmixed. That a certain degree of imagination is required for the reconstruction of history is also no longer denied, except that the imagination of history is qualitatively different from that of literature. History remains external to the event; the historian is a spectator. Literature plumbs the depth of life; the litterateur is a creator. Like God, he can disappear from his own creation.

When history enquires into the child-rearing practices or fear of death in past societies it actually enters the realm of literature, just as the literateur traverses the domain of history in historical novels. Das Gupta, however, does not approve of this artificial fusion. He argues that even if a historical novel remains committed to the facts of history, it usually ends up being either fantastic or modern history merely serves the purpose of esoteric stage decoration. He mentions William Golding's *Inheritors* in which Golding has described a community of Neanderthals whose mind-set is completely unknown to the modern reader and yet appears plausible to him. Here literature tends to assume the mantle of history. But such books are rare. Similarly, Zeldin, Cobb or Ladurie may come very close to unravelling the mentality of a people and in doing so may borrow successfully the technique of a novelist, but their works will still mirror the mentality of an age, such as the bourgeois values of late nineteenth century France. The social assumptions and the intellectual environment of an age do contribute to the shaping of an individual, but a particular individual may rise above these constrictions. History can never adequately explain why two brothers come to acquire diametrically opposite personalities.

Thus, despite the affinity between literature and history, there are significant differences between the two. Das Gupta has attempted to encapsulate this complex relationship in terms of three conceptions of time in human life: a large unit of time that gives direction to society and state, such as the nationalist movement; a shorter stretch of time which structures the daily life of a particular community as exemplified in its particularistic response to a movement of much wider ramification; and a personal time of a private world invisible to the outsider, such as the thoughts of a political prisoner on the night before his execution. The primary responsibility of a historian is to recognize and analyse the changes over a period of time, and since the historian by definition is an outsider, he usually prefers to stay with the large unit of time. Of late, historians are showing a greater interest in the shorter stretch of time, but in this their problems are compounded by two limitations inherent in the discipline of history. A large number of people committed suicide by drowning in the river Seine in the 1790s. The number of such cases went up during those years when uncertainty and repression in post-revolution Paris increased. Here, long-term trends get reflected in a short-time cycle and help the historian lay down a predictable pattern. But in certain years incidents of suicide went up even when Paris was comparatively peaceful, thus upsetting the pattern. Here the historian has no option but to plead that this was due to personal compulsions which history cannot probe. If detailed records of everyday happenings of a small village of no distinction were kept by a fastidious Inquistor, and by some happy chance those survived, it is possible for a historian to reconstruct a vivid picture of rural life in the voice of the actors themselves. This is as near as a historian can get to life in its short-time manifestation. If the records also allow a window into the nature of factional politics in the village—the jealousies, petty intrigues and illicit liaisons—the historian is offered an opportunity to describe emotions and descend into personal time. Depending on the point of view, what saves or spoils history is that the historian cannot push his stories to their logical conclusions if his store of information runs out. That is why a good many stories of the peasants and shephards of Montailloue remain incomplete. We do not get to hear what ultimately happened to Pierre Maury.

Hence, only literature can deal with personal time and do full justice to short time life-histories. This is not to suggest that the novelist cannot negotiate the large unit of time and, Das Gupta argues, for this he need not necessarily fall back on the doubtful mixed genre of historical novel. In his *Clayhanger* or *The Old Wives' Tale* Arnold Bennett has described his contemporary period and has remained throughout with his characters as a spectator. At the same time, Bennett has consciously and very effectively dealt with the three categories of time. The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century transformed the five small townships in north Staffordshire into a city. This is history in the backdrop of which the two sisters Sophia and Constance chose to pursue two different kinds of life. While Constance remained in the provincial town, Sophia ran away to Paris. When the two sisters met again in their native town, they had become old and obese; people laughed at them. They were growing old in their personal time. In the short time of their respective lives, Constance was looking after and modernizing her family business and

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Sophia was running a boarding house. Enveloping these trivialities was the large time which saw the small town prosper through the introduction of railways and other amenities and the German army enter Paris. Possibly Bennett believed and wished to convey that the significance of personal and short times cannot be understood without reference to the large time. However, there are personal times that may exist in an insular void. Emma Bovary lived, sought love and died in a universal personal time where specificities of location in time and place, and therefore of history, are irrelevant. This is the undisputed domain of literature.

Das Gupta has conceded only one book the status of a successful historical novel. In *War and Peace* Tolstoy portrayed life in a large canvas in the backdrop of Napoleon's invasion of Russia. He wrote this novel to expound his conviction that history is directed not by its celebrity-heroes but by a blind irrepressible force that expresses itself through the lives of common men. If a heroic character comprehends the nature of this driving force, his initiative may bear fruit in the lives of faceless millions who are the actual but unsung heroes of history. Napoleon failed to realize this and in *War and Peace* he is an anti-hero, a mere castaway. But general Kutuzov instinctively knew the course through which the mainstream of Russian life was flowing and wisely moved along with it. He did not attempt to create history by his personal heroism, but subjected himself to the dictates of history that created itself. This philosophy of history, enumerated a century ago, may not appear altogether unacceptable to a practicing historian of today. But we also know that the Kutuzov of Tolstoy was entirely fictitious; the Kutuzov of history was a different man. Thus Tolstoy looked for the truth of history in a reformed version of history. Perhaps there is some truth in this, but the search for truth in history is different from that of literature. Only when these two truths converge do the society and the individual become co-extensive.

An individual simultaneously exists in all the three times. If he is a common man, his participation in the large time may be incidental and not easily noticed. Conversely, if he is an important person, a political leader of national stature for instance, he is more conspicuous in the large time and interacts with the common man in the intermediate zone of short time. We have already noted that the personal time of both of them is beyond the reach of history. Understandably, therefore, the historian, more often than not, is a keeper of large time. But if a historian's subject of research happens to be not so much the events, the systems and the processes, but an individual, however important he might have been, the historian has to reckon with, even if minimally, the personal time of the individual and to an extent contend with the novelist. It is not surprising that, given his literary bent, Ashin Das Gupta chose to reflect on Gandhi, the man. The last published book of Das Gupta, *Mania O Anyanya Gandhi* (Calcutta, 1998), is a collection of essays on the evolution of Mahatma Gandhi from Mania, an outwardly undistinguished but unique child, to Bapu, the Father of the Nation, at the centre of all of which stands a terribly lonely figure.

Enquiry into a larger than life historical character, who is within the reach of living memory, is not easy. We have seen that history cannot explain why Gandhi became Gandhi. A comparison with the Buddha is germane. Gandhi internalized the value of non-violence and perfected the technique of *satyagraha* in South Africa. But this personal success did not satisfy him. He came back to initiate the Indians in the path of *satyagraha*. Das Gupta argues that faced with such an impasse the historian does not ask which personal qualities in Gandhi made him the leader of the nation but why did the nation accept him as its leader. In other words, the solution to the problem lies not in Gandhi but in the nation, for the historian, post-facto, takes it for granted that Gandhi would naturally stake his life to launch a non-violent movement for the sake of his fellowmen. If the question is turned around in this way, the broad currents of change in the national life are brought into relief and to that extent particular individuals are pushed backwards. This is what a historian is supposed to do. And yet Das Gupta undertook the immeasurably more difficult task of seeking the Gandhi in Gandhi.

This has been possible partly because Gandhi was not just any other leader, but an exceptional person, whose individuality (not to be confused with his fabled 'eccentricities' such as goat's milk or water treatment) was inescapable. Drawing on Erikson, Das Gupta has shown that from his very childhood Gandhi possessed a very strong ego which is most transparently manifest in his attempts to bring Kasturba under his control. In his relationship of service rather than of love to his parents, he always maintained a pre-meditated distance, and in this cold intervening space stored away and assiduously preserved his strong personal opinions. Gandhi was also exceptionally strong-willed. His intense desire to speak the truth and behave truthfully emanated from his deep sense of self-respect. The British were more powerful, but Gandhi's will was stronger. His non-violence had its origin in this basic dissimilarity in their respective approaches to power. Nonviolence cannot become a force unless it is accompanied by an unrelenting will. It may sound scurrilous, but there have been few people in history as incredibly self-absorbed as Gandhi. Gandhi was convinced that he was a sinner and prone to folly. Consequently, he searched for redemption which found expression in pitiless analysis of his every thought and action. Perhaps his self-absorption pushed him into self-analysis which in turn reinforced his preoccupation with the self. Unlike Narcissus, it is not out of love for but distrust of himself that made Gandhi seek self-realization. His work, his ceaseless search for truth and God, must begin with a redefinition of the self and above all should purify him. This praxis has no place in Marxism. Marx was concerned with the external world; he believed that human beings would change only after the society was reorganized. Gandhi focussed on the mind of the individual; he knew that society would change if only human beings were transformed. Both of them offered models of an alternative society, but while Marx believed that until a non-exploitative social system was established, any attempt at reforming individuals would not only be futile but misleading. Gandhi was convinced that unless men were liberated from their elemental fears and other instinctual bondages, it would be impossible to bring about a new social order. *Satyagraha* would remould men and they would recreate the society. *Satyagraha* was Gandhi's innovation. Prompted by an inner urge, he conceived the idea, made experiments on himself, perfected its technique and offered it to his people. Understandably, Gandhi believed that he alone could conduct the programme. He considered the opinion of others on when to launch the movement, how to negotiate and when to withdraw as irrelevant. If nobody responded to his call, he would walk alone. This unique moral courage and the will to truth, this obsession with the self and uncompromising temperament, and this disproportionate emphasis on the individual made Gandhi a loner, particularly in his later years.

Gandhi failed in his endeavour to carry his people along with him till the end. Deep within himself, he was always a loner; towards the end of his life this would no longer remain concealed. In a superficial sense Gandhi became a loner because the Congress and its leaders ultimately refused to follow his directive. They decided that the time had come to assume the reins of governance of the country and build a modern state. It would be wrong to suggest that they were in a hurry to acquire power. They sincerely believed that this decision was correct and beneficial for the country, and to achieve this Gandhi's ideals were inconsequent. Gandhi never accepted this argument, but due to his love and attachment to the institution and its leaders, he did not sufficiently assert himself. Along with Independence came partition and Gandhi became somewhat indistinct. But Independence was supposed to have been only a byproduct of his *satyagraha*. Hence, his failure should be viewed at an even more fundamental level. All his life he had worked for the friendship of the Hindus and the Muslims and fought against untouchability. He realized at the end of his career that the majority of his countrymen did not really care for either of these objectives. In the dreadful riots of the 1940s Gandhi witnessed the irreversible defeat of his cherished ideal of nonviolence. Rather, communalism took a new turn in reaction to this bloodbath and India gave birth to the Hindu voter. Gandhi was the first victim of this new communalism.

Gandhi was always inclined to walk alone, because he was committed to a truth, very nearly synonymous with his God, which he discovered and followed with his typical fixity of purpose. Yet, unlike Mother Theresa, he could not take refuge in an uncritical and selfless devotion to his truth-God, or unlike St. Augustine, with whom he shared the obsession of being a sinner, in his religious community. Gandhi was a believer, but he chose the politics of the subcontinent as his sphere of activity. His resolve to cleanse the society (often literally) of its filth and to lead his fellow-men to the path of courage and self-respect made this choice inevitable. Still, it is difficult to reconcile between the three incarnations of Gandhi—the renouncer, the visionary of an alternative way of life, and the lover of India. Only Gandhi himself could balance this difficult combination. Therefore, hermitage would have been the appropriate locus of his experiments; but he chose the nation instead. Standing amidst the ruins of all he cherished and attempted to accomplish, Gandhi saw in himself a hopelessly lonely man. He never deviated from his beliefs and worked till the last for the realization of his ideals, but the seed of his failure was buried in his praxis. Although Gandhi is worshipped once a year, he is forgotton in his own country. Yet an individual, isolated by his own convictions, may derive in-

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spiration from the life of this failed hero. Through all the history of his evolution, his friends and adversaries, his fasts and fantasies, his ideals and contradictions, Ashin Das Gupta has attempted to comprehend the tragedy of a lonely man.

The most complex, voluminous and also the most difficult to review among all his Bengali books is a collection of essays on a variety of themes ranging from freedom, tolerance and rationality to Jawaharlal, Azad and the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi, titled *Bishay Sudhinata O Anyanya Bishay* (Calcutta, 1992). These essays, written over a period of twenty-five years in response to the present confusion regarding the past or the future, reflect in some way his interest in literature, historical method and the problem of the individual. Despite, this underlying similarity in approach, it is impossible to summarise the arguments of even some of the representative essays. The topics are diverse and space is limited. However, in the preface, Das Gupta has stated that the essays are arranged thematically, rather than in a chronological order. This confirms my impression that the last essay called "*Robi Thakurer Dal*" (Tagore's Followers) in a way sums up his position on the role of the individual in society.

In his last novel *Shesher Kabita*, written in his seventies, Tagore created a character called Nibaran Chakrabarti, a poet of the post-Tagore generation, who disapproved of Tagore. Tagore's poems were bloodless; they lacked vigour. Amit Ray, the hero of the novel, favoured Nibaran Chakrabarti and praised Labanya, his friend, who still admired Tagore. Amit was smart and articulate; his criticism of Tagore was therefore sharp and dismissive. Labanya could not match Amit in verbal skill, but her judgement was sound and she continued to gently defend Tagore. It is not known whether this defense ever reached Nibaran Chakrabarti, but at the end this poet of the future seems to have found a place among Tagore's followers themselves.

It is reassuring to believe that these followers of Tagore still exist. They are spread out among the countless quiet and gentle Bengalis. For, it is a tradition, a way of life. However, this quiet life contains within it a tremendous resilience which does not advertise itself, but imperceptibly preserves the enduring values and thus paves the way for a better future. It is the duty of every human being to strengthen and enhance this quiet life. Tagore had done precisely that. It is important to remember that Tagore was different from his followers in a number of ways. His depth of perception and courage of conviction are not expected of everybody. In his novel *Ghare Baire* (Home and the World) Tagore attributed to Nikhilesh the qualities he himself possessed and held dear, and to Sandip the ones he despised. Sandip is sensual and drifts with the current. The power of those who can usurp—often in the name of a cause—what legitimately belongs to others is universally recognized. The strength of Nikhilesh is in his renunciation and restraint. He cannot whip up enough excitement within him to act impetuously like a fanatic, even for the service of the nation. When an upsurge sweeps across the nation, he stands up to his conviction, and if necessary, sails against the tide. His innate patience allows him the distance to review every situation and his natural civility stops him from being coersive even in a crisis. Hence, his commitment to what is good and just is not easily noticed; his composure is misjudged as timidity and indecision even by his wife: Tagore, in his irritation, banished Sandip from the scene of action and sent Nikhilesh to die in doing what Nikhilesh believed to be his duty. The Sandips may disappear, but the damage they cause persists. At the end of the novel Sandip fled, but the communal tension he triggered off remained. The struggle of Nikhilesh is against this evil and concomitant suffering and the struggle must continue with the help of those who think alike. That is why it is essential to recognise the importance of Tagore's followers.

The determination of Nikhilesh is hard to come by. But there is no dearth of people who would see in him a reflection of their own ideal. It is regrettable if one cannot pursue one's ideal in life, but it is a disaster if ideal is not considered worthy of emulation. Those who acknowledge ideal as ideal are Tagore's followers; they are not with Sandip. Nikhilesh possessed a rare courage; not all of Tagore's followers can have it. But they have the good sense to recognise courage as a desirable quality and the discretion not to inflate the rank of those who redicule this courage as imprudence. This is sufficient. If this realisation leads one to positive action, we should be in a position to appreciate his fortitude and proclaim that he is one of us.

When the choice is between coarse sensuality and aesthetic renunciation, the followers of Tagore can easily decide. Problem arises when two kinds of renunciation clash with each other, when Tagore confronts Gandhi. If it is simply a matter of renunciation, Gandhi has no parallel. But what do the followers of Tagore do if the followers of Gandhi in a state of emotional frenzy, act in a manner that hurts dispassionate Nikhilesh's sense of probity? They would still favour Nikhilesh, for he was not against renunciation but stood for it. Nikhilesh was against unrestrained action and frenzy that clouds judgement. Gandhi never approved of unrestrained action either. But he saw a nation lacking in self confidence and in the grip of a pervasive fear. He attempted to instill courage in his people by initiating them into the practice of nonviolence. The possibility that this new-found courage might occasionally express itself in frenzied behaviour did not upset Gandhi. He believed that nonviolence would eventually discipline such excesses. This belief proved baseless, but Gandhi himself always acted on it. At the same time, he never ignored Tagore's word of caution. Gandhi regarded Tagore as the conscience of the nation.

The essay ends with a rare declaration of faith:

> "Great people have strong beliefs. Here, Robi Thakur is different from his followers. Belief remains scattered in society; the courage of conviction of every human being is his own. The seers of truth survive—if not in the conduct of the nation, at least in its beliefs. Even if we have not imbibed Gandhi or Tagore in our daily lives, we remember them in distress. The followers of Tagore are spread out in the minds of the people. They will never open shop and thrive. That is a relief. It is unlikely that they will ever do anything much. That is disappointing. But these people know Robi Thakur. The poet has taught them how to distinguish between right and wrong. It seems that somewhere a suitable reply (to evil) is taking shape in the minds of the people. That is my belief.

All times are difficult; some are more difficult than others. In these troubled days, when the present is in disarray and the future holds no promise, it is necessary to declare one's faith in humanity as an oath, as Tagore did in his essay *Sabhyatar Sankat* (Crisis of Civilization), written on his eighteenth birthday during the height of the Second World War. In the premature demise of Ashin Das Gupta we have lost a very distinguished follower of Tagore. It is an irreparable loss not only to the intellectual community, but to all right-thinking people.

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Putting Politics in Command

Nasir Tyabji

IMPERIAL POWER AND POPULAR POLITICS: CLASS, RESISTANCE AND THE STATE IN INDIA, C.1850–1950

By Rajnarayan Chandavarkar

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. xii + 388, Rs. 595.00

It is a sign of the era we live in that the "powerful[ly] revisionist" analysis, that the blurb of Rajnarayan Chandavarkar's book tells us is in store for us, is a revisionism that brings politics to the forefront. What is backgrounded is culture, or rather, explanations of behaviour and attitudes which have a cultural base. Here, a word of explanation may be in order for those readers of *The Book Review* who might wonder what else but politics could be the centrepiece of a book whose keywords are, surely, "power", "resistance" and "state".

Culture seems to have made a role for itself in Indian studies of history on the basis of the argument that resistance to colonial rule did not express itself solely with reference to political forms of struggle against the colonial state: resistance was much more widespread in everyday struggles against the imposition of colonial hegemony which took the form of a cultural onslaught. This included science, medicine, and other forms of "western" knowledge, i.e. where the epistemological base had in the immediate past been developed in the occident. Culture as an explanatory factor was then extended into areas where the peasantry and working classes were active and here, too, the forms of struggle were shown to have been moulded by the specific cultural milieu in which the protagonists lived, and by their culturally determined view of the issues at stake.

When neither Indian society, nor the Indian working class moved towards modernity or a socialist revolutionary movement, respectively, analysts began asking why. What they did not do is what Chandavarkar both advocates and gives empirical examples of: a political analysis of what they (the Indians) actually did do. In other words, the book is a plea against analysis of why certain things were not done, or not achieved, and an emphatic plea against cultural explanations of what was done.

Chandavarkar disagrees with this approach, and would deny the methodological gap that advocates of *culturiste* explanations would claim had been left by an earlier generation of studies of Indian colonial history, mostly Marxist in orientation. These earlier studies, usually seeking a political or economic version of causal events, were said to leave gaps in our understanding of the full range of phenomena that both colonialism and anti-colonial struggles encompassed.

In his introductory essay (the book is a collection of essays) Chandavarkar agrees that a gap was left by the earlier generation of history writing. But this, he holds, was not due to the lack of consideration of the cultural factor. It was due to the shared perspective of both functionalist and Marxist writers of a view that societies (or their components, such as the working class) had a broadly predetermined evolution (the teleological view). When neither Indian society, nor the Indian working class moved towards modernity or a socialist revolutionary movement, respectively, analysts began asking why. What they did not do is what Chandavarkar both advocates and gives empirical examples of: a political analysis of what they (the Indians) actually did do. In other words, the book is a plea against analysis of why certain things were not done, or not achieved, and an emphatic plea against cultural explanations of what was done. Thus (on the one hand)

> We will also have to pursue the hypothesis that the terrain upon which the working class, perhaps any working class, fought its battles was determined by its opponents and therefore, their forms of action reflected not their level of consciousness, but the range of options available to them inside a particular economic and political conjuncture (p. 75).

On the other:

> The development of trade unions was largely conditioned by, perhaps dependent upon, the willingness of employers and the state to tolerate them. It neither signified the development of a particular stage of class consciousness nor did it anticipate the rise of socialism (p. 99).

This could, of course, be merely *fin de siécle* empiricism. However, in three essays dealing with general issues of the working class and the colonial state, Chandavarkar puts forward an interesting approach (not quite yet a perspective) towards the problem of explaining working class behaviour generally, and its battles with employers and the colonial state when this behaviour took on a more contestatory character. A number of threads of reasoning constitute this approach. The first is the notion of crime that the colonial state (the police, in particular) imbibed as it consolidated its control during the 19th century: this notion encompassed specifically defined offences, such as dacoity and riots in particular, but even more problematically, the unstable and arbitrary nature of protest. Organized industrial action was then viewed as tantamount to a riot-in-the-making. The second thread was that of assumptions about colonial society and its cultural peculiarities (p. 229). The third thread was the extension of these cultural peculiarities to the working class and its actions (p. 93, p. 229).

However, the situation was not static. As one of the essays shows, as the degree of organizational unity of workers under communist leadership increased, "... the state intervened less through the office of the police commissioner and increasingly from Government House" (p. 136). Thus, while the police (and the millowners) may not have recognized the distinction between industrial action, and a riot, the shift in the institutional locus of handling industrial relations was an important indication of the state's recognition of this distinction.

Two of the essays deal with themes distinct to that of the relationship between the working class and the state. The first of these argues for an alternative perspective on Indian industrialization. In such a perspective, technology is not to be viewed as a neutral force whose diffusion leads inexorably to the growth of large scale industry. It is actually a site for contestation between workers and management, and thus the labour movement has a discernible impact on the pattern of industrial development. Reinterpretation of Bombay's industrial development through such a perspective results in an interesting story. To this account, a corresponding process could be added. through this contestation not only is the concrete nature of the technical and organizational supervision of the work process defined, but so are the contending classes themselves. Both industrialists and workers, as social classes, change in their mutual interrelationship. The making of the working class is thus also the making of the industrialists. The historical fact, that actually, the industrialists showed little signs of change (they had no need to) would have fitted well with Chandavarkar's characterization of the colonial state.

> Colonialism in India might ... be defined ... as the process by which labour was cheapened and more fully subordinated to capital, both indigenous and imperial ((p. 179).

The clearest example of a situation in which the state's preconception of the nature of crime and violence an Indian collectivity could indulge in was provided by events in Bombay in 1928–29. Although the 1928 general strike in the textile industry had been accompanied by very little violence, the communal disturbances of early 1929 had created a widespread perception that the authorities were not in control of the situation. As Chandavarkar shows, even left wing nationalist newspapers, such as the *Bombay Chronicle*, advocated the adoption of potentially repressive legislation by the Government. It was because of these publicly expressed opinions that the Government was able to go on the offensive against the Girni Kamgar Union, whose organizational base among the Bombay millworkers was severely attacked. A potential collective challenge to the managerial mindset of the Bombay millowners was thus never permitted to come to fruition.

It is here that Chandavarkar's reading of the source material might be questioned. There is surely a difference between teleology and dialectics! In 1928, different sections of workers, from distinct caste backgrounds, and different departments of the mills, came together to form mill committees which were sufficiently cohesive for them to become the main bone of contention between millowners and the union. This experience must have changed workers' attitudes, both on the shop floor, and in the mill districts, and introduced new

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Politics of Identity

G.P. Sharma

MEMORY, IDENTITY, POWER: POLITICS IN THE JUNGLE MAHALS 1890–1950

By Ranabir Samaddar

Orient Longman, Chennai, 1998, pp. 295, Rs. 250.00

The book under review is an important contribution to the study of historical anthropology which still remains a much less developed area of research in Indian academia. Normally, historians and anthropologists, here, do not tread on each other's path and quite often history stops short of anthropology and vice versa thus perpetuating the age old divide between the two.

Set in the ecological surroundings of the jungle mahals (West Bengal), the book under review seeks to explore the different ways in which the local society of Jambani Mahal comprising both tribals and non-tribals, responded to challenges posed by the colonial rule. In trying to understand the intricacies and complexities of changing social cultural and material milieu, the author looks for the reasons behind subaltern militancy. How did an agrarian society based on interdependence of communitarian interests and having common cultural expressions begin disintegrating into mutually hostile social groups under the impact of colonial rule? How did the boundary of community begin redefining itself to allow for new forms of solidarities which were primarily mediated through caste, and new forms of protests which were marked by aggression?

The book opens with a detailed discussion about the sources used. The author has drawn upon a variety of local sources ranging from village notebooks on crime and local affairs, district records to textual narratives of immense value to scholars doing research on localities. One advantage that accrues to the author for using such wide-ranging sources is that he is able to crosscheck one set of information with another which lends greater objectivity to the work.

The second chapter contains an interesting geneological account of the Raja of Jambani and his feudatories based on the textual narratives of two important figures in the history of the mahal, Kashinath Dhal and Sambhunath Sarangi. While the first was an estate official belonging to the kshatriya caste, the second was a brahmin and a priest attached to the royal household. They were basically "cultural chroniclers" who describe the manner in which the cultural ascendency of the Jambani rulers took place. How did it usher in a new cultural regime by subsuming the local culture? Both are concerned in their own ways in projecting the best possible image of their castes and in doing so their accounts at times turn fictive. But this is not to deny the fact that both display a remarkable sense of history and were conscious historians. Kashinath in trying to trace the history of the Jambani raj makes a strong plea for its sanskritized heritage and puts forward a claim for its "high origin". He even goes a step further and equates the ritual position of the kshatriyas, the caste to which the rulers, with that of the brahmins just to show that while they were superior to the latter in all other respects, they were equal and not inferior even in this respect as well. Once the exalted position of the raja is established then the focus shifts toward the prajas and once again praise is lavished on the former for being benign and charitable toward the latter and the raja's rule being characterized by "serene homogeneity and tranquility". The author however points out that this is more of fiction than fact because Hunter's Statistical Account tells us otherwise. It shows that the operation of the Act X of Bengal Tenancy Act of 1859 led to increasing tension between the landlords and their tenants due to the issues of rent enhancement and eviction.

The other account by Sambhunath Sarangi also highlights the process of sanskritization and the pride of place occupied by the brahmins in it. However, the focus shifts from the zamindar family to 'the mutual closeness of the priest and the warrior, the brahmin and the raja.' As torchbearers of the Hindu tradition, their indispensability to the royalty is stressed and it is said that the brahmin's blessings ensures the growth of the family tree of the raja. The role of brahmin is also underlined in civilizing the ruler who offers human sacrifices on each amavasya day to please the local goddess Rankini Devi. It is, however, with the intervention of the brahmin priest that this savage practice is brought to an end and further, the pargana as a whole is civilized with the "combined help of the ruler and the priest". One therefore, finds in this account, the convergence of two processes, one of sanskritization and the other of political ascendency of the Jambani rulers, with the brahmin and the kshatriya complimenting each other's role. While the former as the facilitator of the process of Hinduisation provides legitimacy and religious sanctity to the exercise of political authority by the raja, the latter, in return, lends respectibility to the former by granting exercise of political authority by the raja, the latter, in return, lends respectability to the former by granting him the privilege of being closely associated with the royal household and by patronizing him with rent free land grants.

With the new structure of power, buttressed further by colonial rule, emerged the politics of identity which is the focus of discussion in chapter three. Even as the beneficiaries of colonial rule began to consolidate their position, those who had been left behind or had lost out began to feel insecure. This sense of insecurity derived mainly from three factors—one the extreme charitable disposition of the raja toward the brahmins leading to large scale rent free land grants, two the land survey and settlement operations of 1912 and three the commercialization of forest products. The author argues that during the settlement operations the brahmins managed to record more land under their possession than what had been originally granted to them by the zamindars. As a result the pressure of land revenue began mounting on him. Earlier the Bengal Tenancy Acts of 1859 and that of 1885 had already strengthened the tendency toward rent enhancement because of the fear of large chunks of land going out of zamindar's control. Thus the raja's primary concern was to bridge the gap between rent and revenue. Another development which undermined the subsistence economy of this jungle mahal was the unabated commercialization of the forest and a process of deforestation leading to the breakdown of the moral order. All this, alongwith the famine of 1876, unleashed a process of differentiation in landed property weakening the community ties and paving the way for rural protests.

With the beginning of unrest, the

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system of village headmanship also came under strain. The mandal, as the village headman was called, refused to shoulder the burden of collecting rent because it was not worth the trouble and risk attending this perilous task. As the crisis deepened with large incidence of landlessness the mandals also began opposing the zamindars and assumed the leadership of the movement. A large number of cases of deposition cited by the author provide graphic details of the tales of miseries and woes of the peasants. What added to their miseries further was the intra-family dispute within the zamindari family. The tenants of one zamindar were harrassed by another. In the ensuing breakdown of law and order and the peasant's submission to the new courts of law one finds frequent references to the notions of 'lost prosperity' and 'current misery'.

While referring to the politics of mass mobilization the author finds that the penetration of the Congress in the region was facilitated because of two reasons; one the social reform movement based on the lines of sanskritization amongst the tribals and two, the raja's professed loyalty to the British as is evident from his commitment to help the latter in its war efforts. However, he feels that the entry of Congress had nothing to do with the popular upsurge and that it was a mere coincidence. In claiming autonomy for the peasant unrest he criticises Sumit Sarkar who, according to him, views the unrest in the light of swadeshi politics and finds a kind of linkage between the two. Certain points need to be clarified here. One, the term linkage does not necessarily mean an organic link and two, the national politics of mass mobilization and the anti-zamindari movement did converge in some regions at least for some time. We must bear these facts in mind while discussing the relationship between the elitist and popular movements. The kind of linkage suggested by Sumit Sarkar is only symbolic in nature. A much better exposition of Sarkar's argument can be found in Shahid Amin's work on Chauri Chaura where Gandhi is conceived differently in popular imagination.

While popular memory has survived through textual and oral tradition, the official documents provide the basis for administrative memory. The official perceptions about local society varied according to their real life experiences. Most officials, from the district magistrate down to the daroga, were quite conscious of the existing reality but were constrained to work within the framework of imperial policy. It is quite surprising that the widely held notion about official perceptions being mainly influenced by the colonial discourse is not true. In fact the daroga was able to make a distinction between a "bad" and a "good" tribal according to the prevalent elitist notion of the two terms but he was not quite happy about making a blanket use of the term "Criminal Tribes" while addressing the tribals. The village crime notebooks, written by the darogas, point to the agrarian origin of disturbances in Jambani and hold the manager and the assistant manager of the estate responsible for it. This shows that the daroga had an understanding of the problems of the peasants although the inner dynamics of the rural society, revolving around the issues of social and economic mobility in the colonial context, was beyond their comprehension. He was also well aware of the caste distinctions but could not help removing the official bias along caste lines because he received clear instructions to report events in the light of the activities of each caste. Finally, the author turns from land politics and the politics of identity to politics of culture. Here he counters certain common notions about human conciousness and rightly points out that popular consciousness had its own rationale and any act or acts considered irrational by the outside world had a valid reason and meaning within the realm of popular culture. The local cultural tradition of Jambani became the medium through which the zamindars expressed their power and the peasants their collective identity. The former not only patronized local festivals and rites but also lent an alien flavour to it. One important change that we notice was in the performance of Jhumur, a very well known tribal rite of collective enjoyment. Jhumur singing under their patronage acquired a professional touch and became exclusive. From collective performance it also became an individual act with emphasis being more on the dance rather than song form. It appears that despite such efforts to dominate the local culture some aspects of it did retain their pure form. The problem of retention of cultural autonomy, however, needs to be seen in the light of the process of Hinduisation that had also gripped the tribal peasants. Keeping this in view it is not possible either to sustain the idea of autonomous culture or that of a common culture. It would be interesting to know in this context the impact of weakening community ties on the common cultural experiences.

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Enriching Narratives

Hari Sen

WOMEN IN MODERN INDIA

By Geraldine Forbes

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. xix+289, (incl. b&w illustrations), Rs. 150.00

THE MARATHAS, 1600–1818

By Stewart Gordon

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. xv+202, (incl. maps), Rs. 150.00

THE MUSLIMS OF BRITISH INDIA

By P. Hardy

Cambridge University Press, 1998, Cambridge, pp. xix+306, (incl. maps), Rs. 150.00

THE ECONOMY OF MODERN INDIA, 1860–1970

By B.R. Tomlinson

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. xix+235, (incl. maps, figures, graphs and tables), Rs. 150.00

These four volumes are paperback Indian editions published this year by Foundation Books, New Delhi, of books that are well-known to scholars of Indian history. Hardy's monograph was published in 1972 in the Cambridge South Asian Studies series, and the other three were published in this decade as a part of the New Cambridge History of India.

Forbes' book is an excellent introduction to the history of Indian women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is a wide-ranging and accessible interpretive survey of the historical processes and events in that period, and of the monographs on the subject. Its lucid style and the author's self-consciousness in dealing with the source materials encourages the reader to question the orthodoxies and conventional wisdom of modern Indian history. The book also has a very good bibliographic essay which is very useful for those who wish to explore specific themes in women's history in modern India.

Gordon's book on the Marathas does not have a bibliography, but it does have an introduction which is primarily a discussion of the sources and the historical literature on the Marathas in Marathi and English. The book is an interesting examination of the political and diplomatic history of the Marathas in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The discussion of political history is enriched by narratives of the careers of those who controlled a variety of resources in the rapidly changing apparatus of power among the Marathas. Andre Wink's *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth-century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge, 1986) is perhaps a more complex and sophisticated discussion of the roots and texture of Maratha control, but Gordon too has some meaningful insights into the way in which the Maratha regimes centralized the gathering of information on the districts that they controlled, into the historical importance of the migrations that accompanied the expansion of Maratha influence, and the abiding significance of the traditions of heroism spawned by the growth of Maratha power.

The twenty-six years since Hardy's *The Muslims of British India* was first published have not reduced the value of the book as an informative and well-written survey of the history of sub-continental Muslims in the colonial period. Its style may seem dated to readers with a taste for post-modern gloss, but Hardy's ability to weave critical judgements into a lucid narrative makes the book accessible and stimulating for students in particular.

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The volume has an annotated bibliography which was very valuable in the 1970's, but the large number of monographs on the social and political histories of Indian Muslims in the colonial period published since then have made it somewhat obsolete now. These monographs have greatly enriched the discussion of those histories, but none of them has challenged Hardy's position as the author of the best available introductory survey of the subject. However, without denying the merits of the book, I must point out that the anodyne detachment of the last chapter, entitled 'The two partitions: of British India and of the Muslim community', still leaves me with a sense of disquiet.

Tomlinson's *The Economy of Modern India, 1860–1970* is a good introductory text for the last century of the colonial period. It has the added advantage of covering the first two decades of the republican period, and this enables the author to survey the principal macro-economic trends in early-independent India. The book is a clear and perceptive overview which interprets the specialised literature meaningfully. Read together with Vol. II of *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, edited by Dharma Kumar (Cambridge, 1982), it provides a point of entry into a discussion of modern India's economic history. Tomlinson's perspective offers a valuable corrective to the nationalist rhetoric on colonial economic history that has become axiomatic in the minds of many students, and the book has an excellent bibliographical essay which encourages and assists further reading. There is a rich fund of arguments, insights, interpretations and information in these books and students of Indian history owe a debt of gratitude to the publishers for their reasonable prices. However, it is a pity that the volumes are poorly produced. There are a number of typographical errors in each of them and all of them have pages where the inking is so uneven that sections of the text have become illegible. Hardy's book has pages where the text is obscured by lacerations on the paper, and in my copy of Forbes' volume pp. 265–288 are not attached to the spine. The edition of Hardy's *Muslims of British India* is described as the "First Corrected South Asian Edition 1998" by the publishers, but the corrections have been made rather whimsically, and some errors in the original text have been reproduced in the current edition. For instance, Hardy rendered the name of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (the founder of the Tariqa-i-Muhammadiya) incorrectly as Saiyid Ahmad Bareilly. This has been repeated in the current edition, which seems in fact to be a facsimile reproduction of the original; with a few exceptions. The death of Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana in 1975, three years after the original text was published, has led to a very shabby and misaligned insertion of the year of his death on p. 234 of the current edition. The publishers chose to make room for the four additional digits by reducing the size of the typeface and changing the style and alignment of the digits in the single line in which the insertion was made. Like Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana, Louis Mountbatten also died between 1972, the year when Hardy's book was first published, and 1998, the year of the current edition. But the publishers have decided to ignore Mountbatten's assassination and have reproduced the original "...Lord Louis Mountbatten (1990) . . ." on p. 250; perhaps because they were alarmed by the results of their labours on p. 234. "Corrections" like the one on p. 234 seem needlessly clumsy because if there was some difficulty in making them properly in the main body of the text, they could have been made in the index. In the 1972 edition of Hardy's book, there was a note at the head of the index which stated that "some life dates which would have been difficult to insert into the text in the proof stage have been included in the index." This note has been reproduced in the 1998 edition, but the facility it provided has been neglected.

In times when inflation has made the purchase of books a rare indulgence for students and teachers in colleges and universities, it is indeed unfortunate that these valuable and inexpensive volumes are not better produced.

Hari Sen teaches in Ramjas College, University of Delhi.

Aspects of the Freedom Struggle

A.K. Damodaran

THE MAKING OF A NATION : INDIA'S ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

By B.R. Nanda

Harper Collins Publishers, India, 1998, pp.362, Rs.500.00

The 50th anniversary of the country's achievement of Independence has led to many retrospective investigations into the emergence of India as a nation state in the middle of the twentieth century. There has been a great deal of smug, even unctuous self-glorification. Negative reactions have also been there emphasising the loss of the original optimism and self-respect as a society down the decades. Both approaches are essential if one were to see this period of transition half a century after Independence and three years before the end of the millennium, according to the western Judae-Christian or Greek-Roman chronological conventions accepted by all the cultures of the world today. It is possible to exaggerate these contrary aspects but they are useful because they have become a part of the consciousness of the ordinary educated Indian as much as it is of an American, Russian or a Chinese today. B.R. Nanda's book is an important contribution to the literature on modern Indian history, more particularly the evolution of the National Movement from the "mutiny" in 1857 to the transfer of Power in a strictly constitutional manner by the British Government to the Indian people and their elected representatives in 1947. Nanda is one of the leading scholars on the Indian National Movement. His biographies of Gandhi, the Nehrus and, perhaps, most important of all, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, have helped the modern Indian student of history to understand the major developments in the evolution of Indian nationalism.

The Making of a Nation is, in fact, a new book consisting of old writings, a collection of several extracts from earlier studies of aspects of the freedom struggle. However, it is not a mere compilation of material already available.

They have been carefully selected and put together by the author in a chronologically sequential fashion connected by newly written prefaces to all chapters which achieve the intended effect of a new organic unity and a fresh contemporaneity of even familiar assessments. In doing so the author has carefully incorporated in his analysis most recent studies of the Indian freedom movement including the Subaltern Studies and the Cambridge School's insistence on the British contribution to the Indian achievement. All this is done in the detached and sober style to which we have become accustomed in his earlier writings.

The book traverses 90 years of domestic Indian politics from the first war of independence to the actual achievement of a very distant goal. Throughout the narration there is a continuing sensitivity to the emergence, the creation, the invention, if you want to be a post-modernist or a pessimist, of the Indian nation. This idea is put forward carefully in the introduction which along with the last two chapters, "Reflections on the Indian Revolutions", and "Nehru and Nation Building" gives the idea of India being a nation in the post-Enlightenment sense was always there in the mind of the political elite. Most of the leaders of the Indian National Congress were conscious of a certain homogeneity, cultural solidarity and a distinctive geographical identity. They were all conscious of the contribution of Britain and its administrative arrangements to India's nationhood. As Nanda notes, "Sarojini Naidu, the poetess, when asked by Halide Edib, the Turkish writer, who visited India in 1930s, as to what the British would leave behind when they left India, replied at once: 'A Nation'." There is a consciousness of this national identity in most of the earlier leaders like Pherozeshah Mehta, Ranade, Tilak, Gokhale and Surendra Nath Banerjee. By the time the Indian National Congress was founded by an Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume, in 1885 there was also a consciousness of a unique civilization which preceded the British occupation. Here there were grey areas. There was an absence of discussion of the role of Muslims in Indian society even though these decades witnessed the great achievements of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in reviving the self-confidence of the Indian Muslim middle class. The Congress had its own Muslim stalwarts like Badruddin Tyabji and the future problems which came with the Partition of Bengal in 1906 were still far away but Nanda never overlooks the incipient complexities of the Hindu-Muslim-British relationship troubled as it was by recent history

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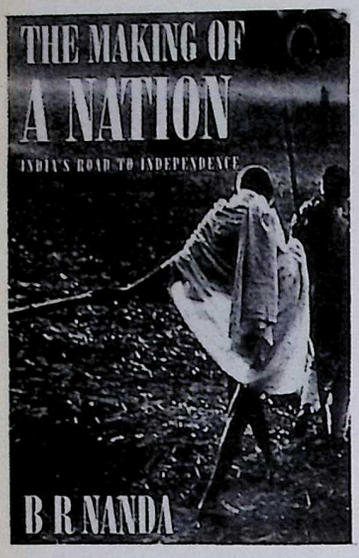

and present challenges.

It is important to be very clear about the word 'Nation'. In Europe, the 19th century witnessed the unification of Germany and Italy. After the First World War came President Wilson's ideology of self-determination which led to the establishment of several nation states, some homogeneous and some multinational out of the two dead Empires, the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian. Today we know that these brief experiments were not all successful. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia have split, one in bloody strife and the other in a civilized arrangement in the last decade. The period after the First World also witnessed the formation of the Soviet Union with many "nationalities" as distinct from "Nations". During the thirties most of us, university students, thought that Stalin's thesis on nationalities was the last word on the subject. Compared with these European developments we have the evolution of the U.S. as the "first universal civilization" with impeccable credentials to be the sole superpower. It is in relation to these global developments that we have to assess the magnitude of India's achievement in shaping a nation state. In Stockholm I was told by a Swedish scholar that India was "Europe made effective". A pleasant enough compliment. This feeling of nationalism was an intoxicating experience during the years before Independence when Gandhi dominated the scene. The experience is summed up by Nanda thus: "Those of us who have lived through the earlier years of Independence would recall, despite The Trauma of the Partition—the buoyant feeling of what Nehru picturesquely described as the realization of India's Tryst with Destiny. The incubus of foreign role had at last been lifted and new vistas of progress have opened. Here, as always, Nanda is objective and scrupulously fair: "One must acknowledge that the optimism of those earlier years has been somewhat diluted". There is no self-flagellation, only wistful introspection.

The 90 years covered in the book are not evenly distributed between decades. The first six chapters deal with the story of the Indian National Movement till 1919 when Gandhi who had been on the "periphery" walked into the center of the stage. Nothing is left out in these hundred pages. It is a comprehensive history of the National Movement from the foundation of the Indian National Congress onwards. All the major events are discussed—the partition of Bengal, the moderate extremist confrontation, the Lucknow Pact, and the Home Rule Movement of Dr. Annie Besant. Eleven chapters deal with the first two phases of the Gandhian revolution in all their various aspects. The author very carefully brings out the technique of revolution and retreat into non-political activities like the constructive programme which Gandhi practised during the three great movements of his leadership of the Freedom Struggle. In doing so all the details are described—Chauri Chaura, the Lahore Congress decision to fight for complete independence, the Round Table conferences, the experiment with limited federalism and the acceptance of office. This period is also notable for the emergence of a group of major leaders round Gandhi among whom Nehru was the chosen heir apparent. There is also a careful investigation of the Gandhi-Bose equation. These chapters bring out the central argument in the book that Gandhi made all the difference to the Indian National Movement and that all the other important leaders had to reconcile themselves to this reality, with one exception. Mohammed Ali Jinnah defied all the dismissive assessments of his position in Indian politics, particularly as shown in the 1937 Elections, and came out with the Pakistan Resolution in 1940. The troubled relationship between Gandhi and Jinnah is seen against the earlier comfortable personal ties the Mahatma had with Muslim leaders in South Africa and in the Khilafat Movement. Nanda refuses to accept the fashionable assessment in recent writings that Nehru personally was responsible for the revival of the Muslim separatism after the Congress refusal to form a coalition with the Muslim League in U.P. It is, of course, one of the "might-have-beens" of the freedom struggle. But if there was an error, the whole Congress leadership, including Gandhi himself, Azad, Kidwai and Nehru, were responsible.

The dramatic decade of the forties is discussed in one single chapter. The Quit India Movement, the I.N.A. Trials, the Change of Guard in London, the Cabinet Mission and the final tragic drama of Independence with the partition and the massacres in both the successor states are dealt with in a brief terse fashion. Here the author seems to have made a deliberate decision to reverse the usual laws of historical perspective and devote to the earlier decades detailed attention while projecting the last dramatic years in the foreground in a synoptic fashion. My personal feeling is that this major decision on the author's part is fully justified. The earlier mainsprings of Indian nationalism and Muslim separatism for two eventful decades require a re-assessment just as the contribution of Gandhi to India's freedom has to be projected as the most important single element in a developing situation.

This is a book written with imagination and a commitment to historical facts. There is meticulous care in preparing the footnotes to each chapter making a clear distinction between the earlier writings which have been utilised and the new editions. The printing and production cannot be faulted. I could only locate, inspite of my anxious efforts, one single error, and that is a charming one. The word "Camps" is printed at the bottom of the wrong page. There is, however, no ambiguity. Obviously Murphy's Law works even in the best regulated printing presses.

There are only two important aspects of the freedom struggle which could have been emphasized a little more than in this book. The first is the emergence of the socialist and the communist parties in the thirties and the forties and their relationship with mainstream Congress politics and with Gandhi and Nehru. The other is purely a subjective reaction. In projecting the image of Gandhi nothing is said about what in retrospect appears to be a major decision on his birthday in 1921 to discard the anonymity of the Gujarati-Hindu dress and adopt the loin cloth uniform. It was a very personal decision. It is also a major historical event. The image of Gandhi in the eyes of the Indian people could never be the same again. It is interesting to recall that not one of his colleagues, not even Vallabhbhai emulated him in this adventurous decision. Images are important in the 20th century and as interesting as Gandhi's loin cloth, is the Gandhi cap which he discarded from this time and which became associated with Jawaharlal Nehru and other senior Congress leaders. To the wide world outside, in fact, the Gandhi cap was Nehru's own patented trade mark. Such are the ironies of personal history in a major political revolution which depended much on the image as on the reality. The loin cloth, the spinning wheel, Khadi, 'the livery of freedom', and salt were necessary symbols to distinguish 'us' from 'them' in a non-violent struggle.

A.K. Damodaran, a former diplomat and a Senior Fellow at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (1980–81) is a well-known commentator on international affairs.

COMMONWEALTH WRITERS PRIZE 1999

Entries close on November 15, 1998

To encourage and reward the upsurge of new Commonwealth fiction and to ensure that works of merit reach a wider audience outside their country of origin, the Commonwealth Writers Prize was established in 1987.

The Commonwealth Foundation and the Book Trust, London, are now inviting entries for the current year. In 1999, there will be one award of Pounds 10,000 for the best book and one award of Pounds 3,000 for the best first published book. Awards of Pounds 1000 in each of the two categories will be given to winners in the four regions of the Commonwealth, Africa, Eurasia, The Caribbean and Canada, and South East Asia and South Pacific. Other rules apply.

Eligibility

Any work of prose fiction is eligible, i.e., a novel or collection of short stories. The work must have been written by a citizen of the Commonwealth, must be of a reasonable length and be in English. It must have been first published between 1 January and 31 December 1998.

Entries

Entries must be made by the publisher. In some countries, self published books may also be considered.

Entries are restricted to four books per publisher, that is, two in each category.

For further details, please contact

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The Moral Justification of Truth Commissions

Rajeev Bhargava

How must societies deal with grave injustice of the past? How do emerging democracies tackle the moral problems generated by gross violations of human rights in the old regime? In the recent past countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, El Salvador, Germany, Hungary, Rwanda have had to face these questions. A widely used instrument in many of these countries to address and to deal with these issues has been the Truth Commission. The government of South Africa also established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 15 December 1995 to confront the brutality of the apartheid regime. It had the unenviable task of publicly recording gross abuse of human rights. More controversially, it had to recommend or refuse amnesty to the perpetrators. The Commission has completed its hearings and is currently writing its final report. In May 1998, a group of philosophers conducted a workshop in Capetown with members of the commission to throw light on the moral justification of such a commission and the painful dilemmas raised by it. Is it morally justified to grant amnesty to perpetrators simply because they own up a horrendous crime? Is truth more important than securing justice? Can justice be sacrificed for the sake of reconciling former victims and perpetrators? Rajeev Bhargava was among those invited to this workshop to present a paper entitled 'Is the Idea of A Truth Commission Justified?' The following article is excerpted from that paper.

In this extract, Bhargava begins his argument by first distinguishing minimally decent and barbaric societies and then draws a distinction between two kinds of barbaric societies which he calls symmetrical and assymetrical. The first distinction, he claims, is relevant for the general justification of the idea of a truth commission, the second necessary to properly fine tune the idea to suit different kinds of transitions. He argues then that individual and collective forgetting of past harms is neither fully possible nor desirable, and that to ask victims to overcome their emotions of hatred and resentment towards perpetrators or to suppress their inherited animosities towards rival groups is to fail both to address their needs and to grasp the requirements of a transition from barbaric to minimally decent situations, i.e. the restoration of a system of basic procedural justice. Since the idea of a truth commission involves public remembrance and since recognition of the need for expressing retributive emotions and coming face to face with one's past is integral to it, and since without such collective acknowledgement a system of basic procedural justice cannot be reinstated, truth commissions have strong moral justifications in their favour. This much is already there in this condensed version of his paper. In the original, longer version he also shows how difficult it is for victims to publicly recall crimes and for perpetrators to acknowledge them and therefore why a public device that helps achieve this needs to be commended. He points out that critics of the idea of a truth commission do not always understand this. They are also unable to see, he claims, that by public announcement and reiteration of a restored moral threshold, truth commissions perform an important symbolic function. The consolidation of a minimally decent society is impossible without a continuous, collective reaffirmation of commitment to prevent evil. These, he argues, are all that a truth commission can aim at. However, it may do more by creating conditions for reconciliation. It may give members an opportunity to own up collective responsibility, confront themselves and effect a deeper change in their ideas of who they are. It may even create conditions for forgiveness, an act Bhargava defends, on moral grounds. Critics of forgiveness fail to properly grasp the radical fallibility in humans, their propensity for wrongdoing and correspondingly the great need for forgiveness within all of us. If a truth commission is able to create conditions for it, he claims, we possess an additional justification for it.

What justifies the very idea of a truth commission? I begin answering this question by distinguishing two human situations, one marked by the complete breakdown of a system of moral rules and the other still governed by it. By moral rules I mean rules that prevent excessive wrongdoing, i.e. evil, and not those which promote particular conceptions of the good or embody substantive values, including a substantive conception of justice. [1] Once these aspects of morality are bracketed the remaining part of a system of morality contains a series of negative injunctions and what Stuart Hampshire calls basic procedural justice. Indeed, basic procedural justice may be seen to lie at the core of a system of moral rules that prevents evil. A situation where great evils are prevented by stable norms of basic procedural justice may be called a minimally decent society. The other situation that has crossed the threshold of even minimal decency may be called a barbaric society. For a minimally decent society to be realized, an agreement from within their respective world views among groups and individuals on norms of basic procedural justice is sufficient. Further agreement on conceptions of the good and perhaps on substantive justice is not necessary. In barbaric societies normative agreement even on basic procedural justice has come apart.

I wish to argue that the primary function of a truth commission is to help societies move from barbaric to minimally decent societies, and, in the aftermath of evil, to reinstate confidence in norms of basic procedural justice. A truth commission stabilizes a system of basic procedural justice by (i) remembering and acknowledging grave injustice in the past and (ii) by getting perpetrators to own up responsibility for excessive wrong doings. To enable people to publicly recall past harms and express retributive emotions and to get perpetrators to admit wrong doing is not as easy as it seems to critics of the idea of a truth commission, or so I shall try to establish. I also argue that a truth commission must be seen to perform Operative acts, i.e. acts that institute a new system of rules.

In a minimally decent society former victims are not reconciled with their former oppressors nor are groups with inherited hostilities towards one another reunited. If so, the primary objective of a truth commission is not reconciliation but the institution of a minimally decent society. It doesn't rule out a future cancellation of estrangement, however. Indeed, a truth commission creates conditions for future reconciliation. It may do this by (iii) fixing collective responsibility in the appropriate way, and in so doing, changing the ideological climate that facilitates as far as possible, former oppressors to shed prejudice and for victims to regain their self respect. (iv) Since victims experience retributive emotions, truth commissions may permit their controlled expression and also help victims to eventually overcome them. When this happens, truth commissions could be seen also as instruments of forgiveness.

It is a mistake not to be suitably sensitive to the distinction between barbaric and minimally decent societies and to believe that identical moral responses suffice in both. A defense of the idea of a truth commission is predicated on this difference and my first objective is to emphasize the importance of recognizing it. However, another distinction needs to be kept in mind. Barbaric societies bifurcate into situations where the generation of evil is causally connected to the actions of a particular group that usually controls the levers of political power and other situations in which social and political evil is collectively produced by everyone. In short, in the first kind of situation some groups and even individuals belonging to the group primarily responsible for evil continue to hold on to a distinctively moral point of view. The second kind of situation is beyond morality altogether. Here everyone or almost everyone has 'madness in the soul'. All hell has broken loose and with that the distinction between perpetrators and victims no longer holds. Afghanistan and the group of countries formerly called Yugoslavia provide the most recent examples of this monstrous universe. But for Indians, the partition of the subcontinent that left more than half a million dead and many more dispossessed remains a vivid, festering example of evil. Though not entirely appropriate I shall call the first situation an asymmetrically barbaric society and the second situation, a symmetrically barbaric society. Norms of basic procedural justice can come apart either if all relevant parties withdraw their consent to them or even when anyone does so. When neither party abides by norms of basic procedural justice then we descend into an amoral social universe, i.e. symmetri-

[1] I am here deploying the distinction between two kinds of moralities: One which prevents evil and the other which promotes the good life.

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The world is peopled with intimate enemies. No one may be presumed innocent. Not only is the distinction between perpetrator and victim erased but also between friend and enemy, between those who you love and those you intensely hate.

cally barbaric society. When only one violates these norms and the other is keen to enforce them, and particularly when the violating group is politically dominant then we inhabit an asymmetrically barbaric society.

Since norms of basic procedural justice can be violated in two ways, perhaps two different kinds of truth commissions are required to meet the specific demands in each of the two situations. Both kinds may perform the function listed above but the one that takes societies from asymmetrically barbaric to minimally decent situations needs to become part of a more complex strategy to include not only symbolic but real reparation to former victims. Perhaps, when we ascend from symmetrically barbaric society to reach the threshold of basic procedural justice, a commitment to or an agreement on any substantial conception of justice is unnecessary. On the other hand, when we move away from an asymmetrically barbaric society in order to reach the same threshold, we may need to make some reference also to the substantial values of victims. This need not involve a general agreement from within but an enforced concession by the once dominant group towards the substantial conception of justice of their former victims is unavoidable. Or else, a general commitment to basic procedural justice and therefore a minimally decent and peaceful society is unlikely to follow. The first truth commission, by placing responsibility for wrong-doing squarely on the entire collective, may assume moral equivalence between individual perpetrators and victims. The second kind of truth commission, if it is to succeed at all, must refuse such equivalence and maintain a morally relevant distinction between victims and perpetrators. Such a distinction survives in a system governed by basic procedural justice if its point of departure was asymmetric rather than symmetrically barbaric society, and must find legal expression, possibe even in the basic structure of the constitution.

II

Among contemporary philosophers, Stuart Hampshire has written insightfully about what I have called barbaric societies. The Second World War and in particular the horror of the Nazi regime provided the occasion for Hampshire to recognize social and political evil: "I learnt how easy it had been to organize the vast enterprises of torture and of murder, and to enroll willing workers in this field, once all moral barriers had been removed by the authorities. Unmitigated evil and nastiness are as natural, it seemed, in educated human beings as generosity and sympathy. . . Once notions of fairness and justice are eliminated from public life and from people's minds and a 'bombed and flattened moral landscape' is created, there is nothing that is forbidden or off limits, and the way is fully open to natural violence and domination.[2] One now witnesses Evil: 'a force not only contrary to all that is praiseworthy, admirable, and desirable in human lives but which is actively working against all that is praiseworthy and admirable.'[3] It is only against the background of evil that some of the most ordinary, commonplace but indispensable decencies of public and private life are brought into sharp relief.

For Hampshire, such evil cannot be prevented by substantial conceptions of justice over which there may be little agreement in society. He argues that in such situations what is required is basic procedural justice. This procedural justice is part of 'a bare minimum which is entirely negative and without this bare minimum as a foundation no morality directed towards the greater good can be applicable and can survive in practice.[4] Justice, on this view, involves fair procedures of negotiation, a sort of machinery of arbitration that forms the basis for the recognition of untidy and temporary compromises between incompatible visions of a better way of life.[5] It is a means of enabling different conceptions of the good life to co-exist and as far as possible to survive without any substantial reconciliation between them and without a search for the common ground. Basic procedural justice makes possible a minimally decent life which has a value independent of any wider conception of the good. Its principal objective, in Hampshire's memorable phrase, is to prevent 'madness in the soul.'[6]

One implication of Hampshire's theory not drawn explicitly by him is this: a proper moral response must be formulated with the greatest possible sensitivity to evil and its aftermath. Not all conceivable moral responses are contextually appropriate. In my view, at least three possible responses exist. A morally relevant distinction is not made by the *first* between a stable minimally decent society and a society in transition moving gradually towards procedural justice or at the start of a process of consolidating it (a society moving from barbaric society to minimally decent society). This first position argues that the same system of moral rules is applicable to both these situations. When people kill mercilessly, betray friends and family, save their own skins at the expense of loved ones, they breach the very moral norms that a serial killer does when he strikes or when a person swindles another for the greater accumulation of wealth. If so, the moral response to this violation must be identical. The *second* position recognizes the difference between a stable society where normal standards of morality and law apply (minimally decent society) and a condition where every moral norm has been eclipsed (barbaric society). It also recognizes that a reliance on a substantial morality or even the full set of rules of procedural justice is impracticable during a period of transition from barbaric society to minimally decent society. However, it does not adequately see, as the *third* position does, that the issue is not merely one of impracticability but of sensitivity to standards of appropriateness in relevant situations. It cannot understand that the move from a barbaric to a minimally decent society also requires that a group or even an entire collectivity be reeducated into a system of morality. The third position carefully notes this significant fact and admits that in a sense it is morally mistaken to elide the distinction between stable and transitional societies and that it is wrong to ask for more in transitional situations. I see this as a clear and endorsable implication of Hampshire's views on procedural justice.

However, much as I admire Hampshire's views, I find them somewhat wanting on two counts. The first is less an objection and more a demand to fully spell out the horror of barbaric society. We need to better recognize the scope and depth of evil, its reach and what all it destroys. Surely, Hampshire is right when he says that 'when Hitler deliberately substituted force for negotiation creating thereby a pliant and demoralized mass fit for domination, he destroyed morality itself in public life."[7] However, I wonder if he is correct in saying that 'morality survived in families, among friends, in professions and perhaps in commerce." Even if he were right about the state of morality during the Nazi regime, I am not so sure this is true of a situation where the threshold of morality has been transgressed by everybody. Evil has a way not merely of spilling over from the public into the private domain but of pervading our intimate life. When morality is destroyed in the public arena it does not leave the rest of the social world unaffected. Friends, lovers, members of the family can all be complications in crime. The world is peopled with intimate enemies. No one may be presumed innocent. Not only is the distinction between perpetrator and victim erased but also between friend and enemy, between those who you love and those you intensely hate. The sociologist, Veena Das reporting on victims of the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 talks of how the traumatic violence of the crowd suddenly revealed to one of its victims the fragility of her kinship universe.[8] Shanti, the victim disclosed that 'It was my own mama (mother's brother) who had advised my husband to hide. He revealed the hiding places of the Siglikar Sikhs to the leaders of the mob. He bartered their lives for his own protection. Go and see his house. Not even a broken spoon has been looted'. Tina Rosenberg gives a moving account of Vera and Knud Wollenberger, husband and wife, dissident members of the peace circle in communist East Germany who risked their jobs and their freedom and were constantly spied upon by the Stasi. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Vera joined the East German Parliament and campaigned for Stasi victims to access their personal files. When she eventually succeeded in accessing her own file, it was full of reports from a Stasi informer with code name "Donald" containing information that could have been known to only one person. "Donald" was her own husband.[9]

The writer Urvashi Butalia recounts the story of personal betrayal within her own family. While most members of her mother's family migrated from Lahore to Delhi across the border, one of her uncles, her mother's youngest brother, stayed back. To prevent harassment and possible eviction, he decided to embrace Islam. The primary motivation it appears was to inherit after the death of her grandmother, the family property. True, his choice to stay back and adopt Islam could be justified in terms of the value of personal

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[2] Stuart Hamshire *Innocence and Experience*, CUP 1989, p. 8 & 69
[3] Ibid., p. 67
[4] Ibid., p. 72
[5] Ibid., pp. 72–78, 109
[6] Ibid., p. 189
[7] Ibid., p. 375
[8] Veena Das, "Our Work to Cry: Your Work to Listen", *In Mirrors of Violence*, (Delhi 1990), 347–348
[9] Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land*, (New York, 1995) xi–xii.

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autonomy. But what deeply hurt the rest of the family was his reluctance to send Urvashi's grandmother to India. This appeared to have undermined his mother's autonomy and deprived the rest of the family of her presence amidst them. Presumably, the uncle knew that her departure from Lahore would almost certainly have terminated his right to the family property.[10]

I hope it is clear by now that the crossing of the threshold of morality means not the violation of some norm implicit in a particular conception of the good, nor indeed the overstepping of a barrier created within that conception, but rather the breakdown of basic procedural justice that deprives people not only of a minimally decent public domain but also of love and affection in private life. Conversely, the restoration of basic procedural justice revives not only a healthy public arena but also intimate living.

My second point concerning Hampshire's view is a real objection. I do not think he sufficiently distinguishes asymmetric from symmetrically barbaric societies. The two differ not in the scale or quality of evil or in the significant absence of norms of basic procedural justice: both situations are deprived of justice and as a result face an enormous excess of wrong doing. However, this difference still remains that one is wound up by the aspiration of its victims to some morality, while the other has blown up all moral norms. Under Nazi or the apartheid regime, the outraged moral sense of some victims still survives; after all only the perpetrators can be held responsible for suspending basic procedural justice and not the victims. This is why, by legitimately calling upon norms of justice, victims can claim that they have been wronged by a group and by its immoral system. In symmetrically barbaric society, the responsibility for the breakdown of justice is shared by everyone and therefore no one can claim moral immunity by professing unique victimhood.[11] Hampshire carefully registers the moral validity in transitional situations of the third response mentioned above but not that it must be more finely sculpted to answer different manifestations of evil. He does not fully see that a society aspiring to move towards or consolidate minimally decent society could have had different points of departure, and therefore the institutional mechanisms embodying a complex moral response may also have to be different.

If I am correct then it is a matter of great importance to judge whether or not a given social state of affairs has crossed the threshold of morality, how and to what extent. It is mistaken to expect, when it has, that normal justice will be immediately available to everybody. Equally, if the threshold has been crossed in one rather than another way, by one group rather by everyone, then it is hopelessly wrong to believe that the institutional mechanisms appropriate for say a transition from a symmetrically barbaric to minimally decent society is also valid for transition from an asymmetrically barbaric to a minimally decent society. A society such as South Africa occupies a delicate, unstable ground and unless fully alert its members can easily walk into two explosive moral land mines. If victims in South Africa behave as if they have at their command a consolidated system of procedural and substantial justice, then by this very action they can precipitate a slide into symmetrically barbaric society. If former victims don the mantle of victors and seek comprehensive retributive justice in either its no-nonsense revolutionary or its liberal democratic form, then they may instantly turn into victims all former perpetrators and beneficiaries. If the distinction between victims and perpetrator is obliterated, South Africa will turn like former Yugoslavia or like India during its partition. This would be a disaster because South Africa has had a monstrous political regime within a roughly moral social universe but has not before descended into an amoral social universe. It has been an asymmetric not asymmetrically barbaric society. It would also be a mistake to view the situation in South Africa as dominated by features widely prevalent in symmetrically barbaric society. A failure to recognize that perpetrators and victims are clearly demarcated within South Africa can also push it beyond the threshold of morality. If Black victims and their White oppressors are treated identically or if the deep humiliation of the victims is not properly addressed, we may yet find that for victims the road to minimally decent society may inevitably seem to go via a regression to a symmetrically barbaric society. The deep irony in South Africa is that at the very moment it begins to consolidate a system of basic procedural justice and perhaps move beyond it, it faces the greatest danger of hurtling into an amoral universe. In taking its first step from an asymmetrically barbaric society towards minimal decency and beyond, it can swiftly slide into a symmetrically barbaric society. When after years of deeply humiliating and exploitative regime of apartheid, South Africa moved relatively peacefully to a democratic system, in one fell swoop it created a deep moral dilemma for the oppressed Blacks. One false move on their part can send the whole country spiralling from a clearly recognizable moral universe into a condition of complete moral normlessness—a condition it has never witnessed before. This is why I believe South Africa needs a truth commission, albeit of the second kind.

It is equally mistaken to treat societies emerging from symmetrically barbaric situations, as if they were bouncing back from asymmetrical barbarism. Consider once again India going through political partition. The fear and radical uncertainty generated by new borders drawn on the basis of religion forced people from their homes in order to live securely with people of their own ilk. More than ten million people crossed borders. To say that this 'transfer of population' was violent is an understatement. Nearly a million were slaughtered and almost a hundred thousand women were abducted and raped by marauders belonging to a religion other than their own. Responsibility for this savagery cannot however be laid at the door of any single religious group or set of individuals. In such situations to speak of or revive the distinction between victim and perpetrator or to make the 'victim's status as victim the constitutive pillar of a new political order' would amount to perpetuation of evil.[12]

III

Let me begin this section by quasi-phenomenologically examining the experiential condition of victims in the aftermath of evil. What, in the aftermath of evil are their expectations and are they legitimate? Two responses are typical among them. One is to disengage from the world, of which the numbing of emotions is at once a symptom and constituent. The second response of engagement with the world takes many forms. It involves both an obligation to oneself, say to overcome personal trauma, and an obligation to other victims, especially to people to whom we remain attached even after their death. It is a recognizable need in victims still engaged with this world to tell their story, to relate their own version of events, to point out the aggressor and amplify the aggression. Understandably, victims experience deep resentment and hatred towards those responsible for their misery and are frequently moved by revenge. To identify the perpetrator of the crime, to publicly tell what he did and how, to get him to publicly acknowledge this and to feel strongly that he be punished is a fairly common experiential condition of the victim. If the function of truth commissions is to enable victims to express and fulfill even a part of these needs, then a positive evaluation of these needs must go a long way toward justifying them. If truth commissions fulfill these needs of transitional societies, then we might say that they are necessary and sufficient in such contexts.

Against the argument that truth commissions are sufficient and necessary in societies transiting from barbaric society to minimally decent society, two opposing criticisms can be levelled. The first view holds that a truth commission does far too little and is clearly inadequate. Its fact finding function can be performed by commissions of human rights abuses. Its cathartic functions can as easily be performed by private bodies. What the victims need, so the argument goes, is real social justice, not symbolic reparations that follow forced forgiveness. Besides, how can murderers be allowed to walk free merely by disclosing what

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[10] Urvashi Butalia *The Other Side of Silence*, Viking, Penguin India, 1998.

[11] I realize that some societies embody both situations and are therefore marked by a fundamental ambiguity. For example consider East European societies and the communism. Its citizens were at once victims and complicitous to a great extent in maintaining a repressive regime. Perhaps we need to identify a fourth situation where over time people become their own worst enemies and together make their own hell. For a perceptive account of post-communist societies, see Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land*.

[12] I here react to the discussion among Kanan Makiya, Charles Maier and Yael Tamir at the International meeting on truth commissions organized by the World Peace Foundation. I believe that the distinction I draw between situations (b) and (c) help clarify what is at stake. Clearly, there exists a situation where the new moral order must not immediately erase the status of the victim, just as it would be wrong to retain it in another. The answer to Kanan Makiya's question: should we establish commonality on the basis of rights or on the recognition of pain must be determined contextually. See, Henry J. Steiner, (ed.), *Truth Commissions, A Comparative Assessment: World Peace Foundation Reports* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 31.

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is public knowledge anyway? Therefore, truth commissions neither provide an adequate strategy to deal with past injustice nor achieve reconciliation. I do not here address this critique. But there is the radically opposed view for which truth commissions inherently do more than is required in such situations. Those who hold this view inundate the victim with advise to check emotions. Rather than tell publicly and remember past injustice, victims are exhorted to forget. They are asked to contain hatred, overcome resentment, in short to condone or immediately forgive. Revenge to which resentment may lead them, they are told, is unbecoming of civilized people, full anyway of terrible consequences for society. These critics draw a distinction between the felt needs of the victim and the real needs of the entire community and suggest that the two often run against one another. Is it not difficult to reconcile the current needs of the person qua victim and future needs qua citizen of a well ordered society? Instead of focusing on the past, the victim is told to think of the future. In brief, on this view truth commissions are dangerous or unnecessary, at best. It is this critique that I primarily address here.

What is wrong with forgetting? Is it not true that remembrance of past harm reinforces asymmetries of power? The fear of physical suffering in the future feeds on the remembrance of past acts of repression. It encourages passivity and obedience in victims that serves the interests of the powerful. But such remembrances cut both ways. If memory of suffering is kept alive, reprisal is always possible at a future, opportune moment. Therefore, among former victims, a motivated forgetfulness of their own wrong doing, accompanied with the hope that former victims will quickly forget past suffering is not uncommon when asymmetries of power are dissolved. In this context, calls to let bygones, to wipe the slate clean or start afresh, work unabashedly in favour of perpetrators of crime. Forgetting cannot be brought about intentionally. The demand on the victim to forget past injustice is in reality an injunction to forgive or to not publicly recall past injustice.

Most calls to forget disguise the attempt to prevent victims from publicly remembering in the fear that 'there is a dragon living on the patio and we had better not provoke it'.[13] But it is doubtful if this is a good strategy for repairing wounds or achieving reconciliation. When a person is wronged, he is made not only to suffer physically but is mentally scarred, the most injurious of which is the damage to his sense of self respect, if he is left with any residue of it. As Jeffrie Murphy points out when a person is wronged he receives a message of his marginality and irrelevance.[14] The wrong doer conveys that in his scheme of things the victim counts for nothing. Since self esteem hinges upon critical opinion of the other, the message sent by the wrongdoer significantly lowers the self esteem of the wronged. The insult and degradation inflicted is in fact a deeper moral injury. This loss of self esteem is not addressed by demands to forget past injuries. Indeed, it inflicts further damage. Asking victims to forget past evils is to treat them as if no great wrong to them has been done, as if they have nothing to feel resentful about. This can only diminish them further. There is another way this happens to which Jeremy Waldron has drawn our attention: "When we are told to let bygones be bygones, we need to bear in mind also that the forgetfulness being urged on us is seldom the blank slate of historical oblivion. Thinking quickly fills up the vacuum with plausible tales of self-satisfaction, on the one side, and self-deprecation on the other.'[15] Beneficiaries of injustice then come to believe that gains accrue to them due to the virtue of their race or culture and victims too easily accept that their misfortune is caused by inherent inferiority. Waldron is on to something important here. The call to forget reinforces loss of self esteem in the victim. Furthermore, neglected moral injuries putrefy demoralization in the victim. Under these conditions, past perpetrators feel that they can get away with murder and they grow in confidence that such injuries can be inflicted without resistance even in future. Therefore, rather than prevent, forgetting ends up facilitating wrong acts. I can't help but conclude that proper remembrance alone restores dignity and self respect to the victim.

A proper remembrance is critical if wounds of the victim are to be healed. It is also necessary to fulfill the collective need of a badly damaged society. This view comes up against a pervasive social condition as well as against Hobbes's argument. It is an uncomfortable fact that while societies remember their heroic deeds they suppress memories of collective injustice. Recall Ernest Renan's remark that nations are constituted by a lot of forgetting. In a perceptive essay, Sheldon Wolin wonders if collective memory is an accomplice of injustice and whether by its silence on collective wrongs, it does not signify the very limits of justice.[16] But he also asks if a society can ever afford to remember events in which members feel tainted by a 'kind of corporate complicity in an act of injustice done in their name.' Can France remember the Saint Bartholomew massacre, America, its civil war, India, its partition? Can these be remembered by being represented in civic rituals? One philosopher who thought collective forgetting necessary was Thomas Hobbes. Suppression of memories of past wrongs was essential because if society is treated as a building made of stones then some stones that have an 'irregularity of figure take more room from others' and so must be discarded.[17] Hobbes's covenant was a device to incorporate social amnesia into the foundation of society. Commenting on this, Wolin remarks that a necessary condition of social amnesia, for Hobbes, was that men dehistoricize themselves.

Is dehistoricization possible? I think not. Besides, to imagine that as grievances recede into the past and are half-forgotten, they will somehow cease to be real is to live in a fool's paradise. As Ignatieff puts it 'Collective Myth has no need of personal memory or experience to retain its force.' A band of political adventures who also happen to be Muslims invaded India in the 12th century but for many Hindus, Muslims continue to be invaders who may kill, destroy and convert them. The conquest of Quebec by the English happened more than two centuries ago but for Quebec nationalists their nationalist project 'involves a reconquest of the conquest.' A large part of nationalist agenda all over the world is about settling old scores. In so many countries people remarkably similar in essential respects appear to go at each other's throat simply because once upon a time one ruled over the other. A strategy of forgetting has simply not worked. Only an appropriate engagement with the past makes then for a livable common future. It is true of course that one must guard against cosmetic remembrance. An engagement with the past must take place at the level of emotions. If not properly addressed grievances and resentments resurface. Oddly, animosity between groups is sustained even when it goes against their current interests. This happens because emotional reactions ingrained in the human mind remain insensitive to altered circumstances and are bequeathed from generation to generation. Like property, animosities are inherited too![18]

Nonetheless, former victims and fragmented societies eventually need to get on with their lives rather than be consumed by their suffering. Perhaps victims need to forget just about as much as they need to remember.[19] People who carry deep resentment and grievance against one another are hardly likely to build a society together. Therefore, to ask people to forget is not *entirely* unreasonable. I believe timing is the essence of the issue here. Forgetting too quickly or without redressal, by failing to heal adequately, inevitably brings with it a society haunted by its past. One can't forget entirely, too soon and without a modicum of justice. Clearly, while some forgetting at an appropriate time is necessary, a complete erasure is neither sufficient nor desirable for healing or consolidating a minimally decent society. Moreover, while specific acts of wrong doing need to be forgotten eventually, a general sense of the wrong and of the horror of evil acts must never be allowed to recede from collective memory. Such remembering is crucial to prevent acts of wrongdoing in the future. I conclude that without a proper engagement with the past and an institutionalized remembrance, societies are condemned to repeat, reenact and relive the horror. Forgetting is not a good strategy for societies transiting to a minimally decent society from asymmetrically or symmetrically barbaric situations.

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[13] Quoted from Tina Rosenberg in Alex Boraine, Janet Levy and Ronel Scheffer, *Dealing with the Past* (Idasa, 1997), p. 66.

[14] Jeffrie G. Murphy, "Forgiveness and Resentment" in Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, (Cambridge, 1990), p. 25.

[15] Jeremy Waldron, "Superseding Historic Injustice", *Ethics*, Volume 103, (1992), p. 6.

[16] Sheldon Wolin, 'Injustice and Collective Memory' in *The Presence of the Past*, (Baltimore and London, 1989), pp. 32–46.

[17] Ibid., p. 37.

[18] On this see Hume, 'Of Parties in general' in *Political Writings*, p. 160.

[19] Michael Lapsley, member of the African National Congress was a victim of the letter bomb in which he lost both his hands and an eye and shattered his eardrums. He writes, 'For a very small amount of time I thought it would have been better to have died. I had never met anyone without hands so I did not know that life could be meaningful. I was faced with some important questions and one of them was: Do I allow my life to be consumed with hatred, bitterness, self-pity and desire for revenge? (Later) I realized that if I was to spend the rest of my life looking for revenge or hunting for those who had sent me that letter bomb, it would consume me. The result was that I was able to say: "I am going to live my life as fully, as joyfully, as completely as possibly and that is my victory." Veena Das notes that the behaviour of women victims of the Sikh massacre in 1984 in Delhi—their tendency to grab everything from various relief agencies—did not match middle class expectations of dignified behaviour and was initially very puzzling. Later she saw it as a healthy sign of women recovering and re-engaging in life. 'The need to corner as many relief goods as they could get gave some structure to women's activities and helped them to think of the future, to symbolize it in the new commodities that relief was bringing in their lives.' See Das, *Mirrors*, p. 366.

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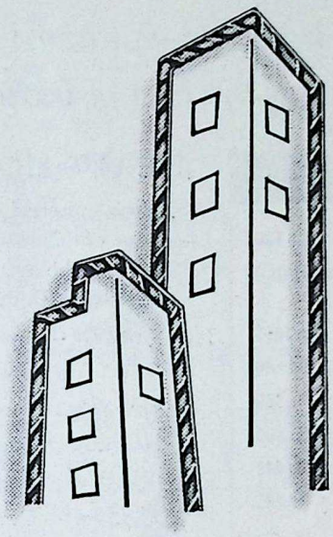

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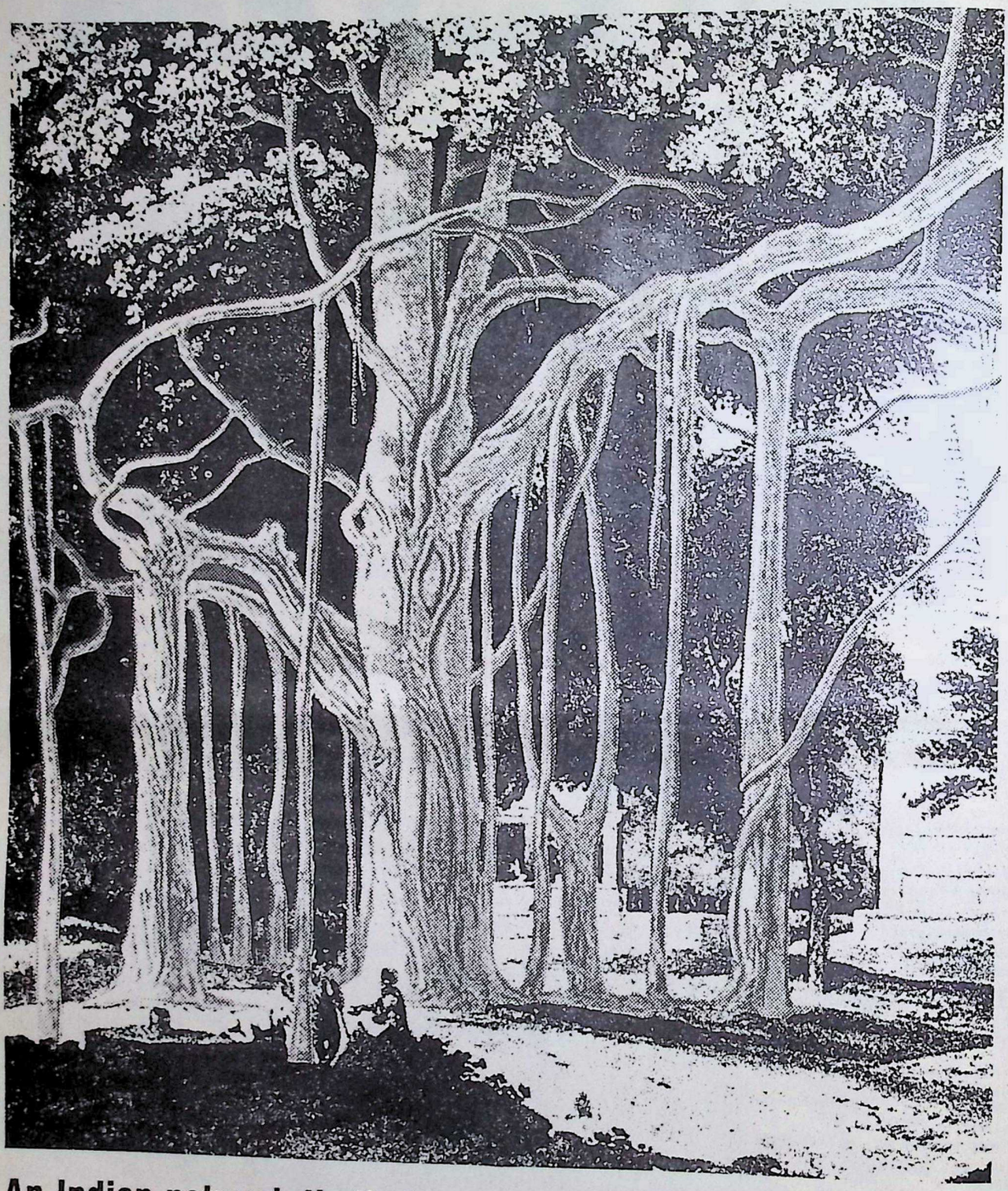

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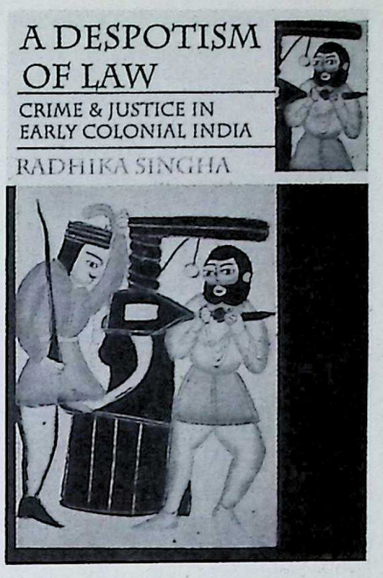
Evolving Contours

Nandini Sunder

A DESPOTISM OF LAW: CRIME AND JUSTICE IN EARLY COLONIAL INDIA

By Radhika Singha

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 342, Rs. 550.00



Last month, I was called upon to stand bail for a friend of mine for a relatively minor offence. Normally, the police would not even have condescended to make arrests. Yet, because some VIP had happened to be somewhere in the vicinity of the alleged misdemeanour, days went by, and there was no sign of bail. In place of the dramatic court room scenes I had come to expect from Hindi films, there was just a harassed looking judge in a small crowded room, a defence lawyer who scuttled about and muttered a few things, and an investigating officer who merrily lied through his teeth. A week later, I had fully experienced the despotism of the law.

In this remarkable book Radhika Singha brings to light the early history of colonial law making and the long drawn process of what Marx Galanter has referred to as 'the expropriation of (indigenous) law'. Singha starts her book by noting Macaulay's presumption that the clean legal sweep envisaged by the draft penal code of 1837 was possible because of the 'enlightened and paternal despotism' of the colonial state, and ends by concluding that in fact "major changes in substantive law were limited, because so many conceptual battles had already been fought and won in this sphere." (p. 299) Her book is a sustained exposition of the historical, cultural and legal issues around which these battles were fought, the manner in which the colonial state struggled with and accommodated indigenous conceptions of rank or notions of justice, while at the same time it extended its principles of sovereign right and political authority. There was thus a constant backward and forward motion, as the state looked over its shoulders to a 'traditionally conceived public' while attempting to constitute an enlightened Indian public through its new normative codes. This question of heterogenous publics, including diverse British ones, to which judicial changes were addressed, and in the context of which legal interpretation was fashioned, is one of the most interesting insights of the book. Yet like much else, it has had to be compressed into a woefully small corner, to accommodate other insights, leaving the reader with the feeling that Singha could profitably have written a dozen books based on the material she has presented here. The book has a chronological and geographical unity—dealing with judicial enterprise in the Bengal Presidency (including Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and non-regulation tracts like the Sagar and Nerbudda territories), from about 1765 to 1837. However, it is perhaps better read as a collection of essays dealing with different subjects but woven around a common theme.

For some surprising reason, given that the law is so much a part of us, both legal history and legal anthropology have been vastly neglected fields in South Asia. Apart from a few articles by 'Subalternists' (see Ranajit Guha on abortion in 'Chandra's Death' and Shahid Amin on approver's testimony) and others (see Michael Anderson and Sumit Guha ed. *Changing Conceptions of Rights and Justice in South Asia*, 1998), historians en masse have failed to tap this rich source. While there are studies of thuggee, sati, infanticide and other such practices which came to be criminally defined (see for example the works of Lata Mani, Anand Yang, Sandria Freitag), the focus there is largely on understanding these practices in themselves, rather than as in Singha's book, for what they illustrate about law or the extension of state right. Among anthropologists/sociologists, while the study of disputing processes was often an essential part of village studies, and we have a few studies of village or caste panchayats (see section on conflict resolution in Jayaram and Saberwal ed. *Social Conflict*, 1996) there is very little on modern law courts (with a few exceptions like Baxi, Mendelsohn or Galanter) or other applications of the law. Feminist scholarship on law is increasing (see Ratna Kapur ed. *Feminist Terrains in Legal Domains*, 1996), but the quantity is nothing to write home about. This listing of work is hardly exhaustive, but the message is clear—legal studies is a field waiting to explode in India in the way that ecology has. Singha's book seems set, by the weight of its scholarship and the range of issues addressed, to be in the forefront of this explosion.

The process by which Anglo Indian law came to subsume and displace existing legal processes is familiar in its broad outline, though the details may be disputed. Scholars like J.D.M. Derrett, Bernard Cohn, Marc Galanter or Vasudha Dhagamwar have in one way or another pointed to the manner in which indigenous codes were retained in the civil sphere while criminal law was subject to a more sweeping overhaul. The kind of indigenous law that was retained was one that had been developed in consultation with Hindu or Muslim elites, and was thus more textual, more shastric than that which in fact governed the conduct of the masses. Yet, what marks Radhika Singha's book is the historical detail she brings to her analysis, which in turn makes us rethink too easy a generalization of the process, at the same time as she provides a fairly comprehensive account of how criminal law and institutions came to develop in a certain period. We are provided not only with the dilemmas of colonial law makers (the history of jurisprudence), but also a dose of the ideology by which offenders acted and by which they expected to be punished and their reactions when the law operated under different rules. The rest of this review will highlight selectively, as well as briefly, the arguments made in each chapter.

The first chapter deals with the transition from a Mughal order to the company's judiciary in both institutional and legal terms. Colonial authorities castigated certain principles of Islamic law—such as the exercise of discretion in the choice of punishment or tailoring of the punishment to the income of the offender, or as in some successor states, the overlapping of judicial and revenue functionaries—as indicative of extreme venality. Yet discretion continued to be central to colonial criminal law, especially in the manner in which it dealt with persons who were branded as part of suspect communities. The second chapter examines the manner in which the new identity of legal subject before the colonial state had to compete with a variety of other (e.g. caste, gender) identities. Simultaneously, legal shifts around criminal intention, mitigating circumstances, value of confessions etc. changed the expectations of parties involved and the basis on which they conducted themselves in court. The Company's means of gathering information was necessarily inflected with local relations of power. For instance, the *surathal* was not an eyewitness account or a complaint lodged by the plaintiff, but a composite attestation based on some sort of fact-finding by the *amil* and local notables. Elite participation in the framing of the *surathal* gradually grew more reluctant as their participation in court created problems of stature. Among other things, taking oaths was seen as denigrating by elites, implying that they stood in an equal relationship to the ruling authority as did other commoners. As against provisions in Islamic law which concentrated on the consequences of a criminal act for the injured party and the victim's (or his heirs') right to compensation, the thrust of colonial law was to redefine the crimes as offences against the state or public at large. Consequently, punishment became harsher. Faced with a death penalty for the offender, the relatives of many victims, still operating within an older normative code of victim's rights to retaliation—were reluctant to have the blood on their hands. In this chapter, Singha substantially extends Jorge Fisch's argument that in doing away both with what they saw as the mildness of Islamic law (the exacting rules of evidence) and the barbarity of punishments like mutilation, colonial law was in many respects harsher than anything known before, especially in its use of capital punishment.

The way in which colonial criminal law entered into accommodations with indigenous hierarchies and forms of victimisation emerges most clearly from the third chapter which deals with two anomalies in the law relating to homicide: the exemption Brahmins enjoyed from the death penalty and the tolerance shown to those who assisted in

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sati. The whole discussion of Brahmins inflicting violence on themselves or preferably on the weakest female member of their family as a form of bringing shame on the other is fascinating not only for the light it throws on indigenous normative codes, but as Denis Vidal has pointed out, for its presaging of Gandhian satyagraha tactics. While others have remarked on the fact that the domestic sphere was maintained as outside the purview of the state by both the colonial authorities and nationalists, Singha takes up the issue of how the boundaries of the domestic sphere itself were defined. In chapter four she deals with the subjects of infanticide, adultery, fornication and enticement. While domestic slavery in terms of the sale of women and children may have been curtailed, and an attempt made to demarcate the affective domestic sphere, the scope for patriarchy within this sphere was strengthened through the judicial underpinnings given to a discourse of honour.

Chapter five deals with the attempt to eradicate thuggee and the tension between a supposed need for extraordinary laws to deal with an extraordinary kind of criminal, and the need to have a more standard system. There are two aspects to this that deserve highlighting—one is Singha's deconstruction of thuggee itself as the work not of organized gangs, but roving bands of demobilised or would-be soldiers, or peasants driven to combine their normal forms of subsistence with highway robbery etc. The second is her point that the whole build up of information on thuggee, "actually disguised an inability to acquire information which could bring the specific offence home to the offender" (p. 217). Though Singha herself is silent on this, it would be interesting to reflect on the similarities between the thuggee legislation and TADA. Chapter six goes on to study penal reform—including issues such as the use of outdoor convict labour to build roads, the way in which public hangings backfired, the influence of the medial profession, the moves towards a standardization of penal procedures, including messing (providing cooked food rather than raw rations to prisoners), yet accompanied by concerns about which castes could eat together. The epilogue touches upon the issue of racial equality before law among other things. All this is a mere fraction of what the book contains, and many will read it again and again, gleaning different nuggets of information and ideas each time.

Every book generates its own wish list—things readers would have liked the author to have done or written about. One such wish would have been an appendix containing the various Acts or Regulations Singha refers to in the text. The major criticism of the book, however, has to do with the descriptive footnotes. In a substantial number of pages, the text consists of one or two paragraphs while the footnotes hog the rest of the page. Many of these could easily have been omitted without any damage to the argument, while others would have been more profitably deployed in the text itself. One can understand Singha's eagerness to share interesting asides with the reader, but at some level it becomes self-indulgence. While it may be good value for money to get two books (text and footnotes) for the price of one, is it fair to readers to destroy their pleasure in a book by so many footnotes? Readers should also be warned that with or without footnotes, this is not bedtime reading, owing to the sheer density of information and ideas. It took me approximately a week of full time committed reading.

Minor caveats apart, this is an extremely valuable book, which one hopes, will act as the spark for a brave new field of historical and social studies of the law.

Nandini Sundar is a Reader in Sociology at the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi.

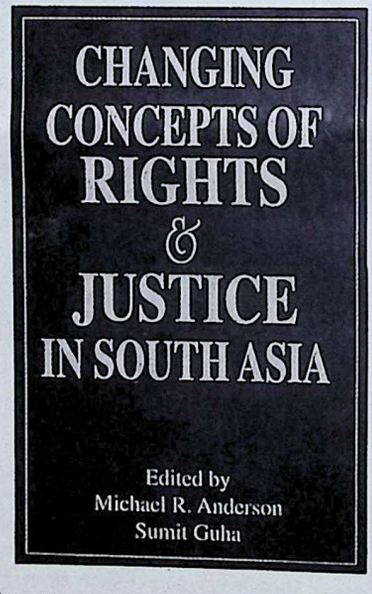
State, Society and the Law

Usha Ramanathan

CHANGING CONCEPTS OF RIGHTS AND JUSTICE IN SOUTH ASIA

Edited by Michael R. Anderson and Sumit Guha

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 288, Rs. 495.00



The relationship that law forges between the state and society is inadequately represented in writings on legal history. It is not difficult to see that law is made, practised and traditionalized in its own image. Standardizing the processes of law-making, drawing upon precedents, and institutionalizing justicing have contributed to making this happen. Law is also a means by which, sometimes covertly, at other times more obviously, the concerns and prejudices of those in control acquire legitimacy, certainty and continuity. Dislodging interests which have taken root in the law would call for further exercises in law-making—a process that may, in certain instances, be activated only through law-breaking. In this movement for change, legal history, which explores the dynamics of the law, legal institutions and legitimized power acquires a relevance. The papers in this volume, which are predominantly presentations in legal history and include some work on more contemporary human rights issues and movements, signal a renewed interest in this field of study.

Lawyers looking at law tend to concentrate on 'black-letter' law, and to limit themselves to finding doctrinal coherence in the development of law—a rather insular approach, to which the editors allude. Work by historians has tended to "eschew questions of doctrinal development", and "there has been little work exploring how legal concepts have been appropriated or manipulated by different groups in civil society". (p. 2) Anthropologists have stayed with "popular idioms of justice, but these generally ignore the doctrinal details of state law, and do little to explore the dialogue between official and demotic legal concepts". (p. 2) With this introduction, the logic of stringing together a set of disparate papers written by historians, anthropologists, economists and others, besides lawyers, stands explained.

Sumit Guha's article, located in the 18th century, attempts to tease out a conception of rights, and of their recognition, from instances he culls out from history. And he concludes that if the various rights of "men and women, chiefs and servants, peasants and clerks, buffoons and prostitutes" had a source, "it was the dead past resurrected in the present as custom; and custom. . . was largely an epitome of past balances of social power". (p. 26) This is an interesting lead up to Radhika Singha's description and acute analysis of ". . . Colonial Criminal Justice in the Benaras Zamindari, 1781–95". Her work traces the intersection between the colonial delineation of criminal law and the practices that were in place when the Company's criminal law and courts intervened. There is the snapping of connection between revenue collection and investigation into crime which appears to have happened between 1795 and 1807, when police powers were taken away from amils and vested in a police darogha appointed by the British Magistrate. (p. 37) The changing position of the elite and of 'respectable' persons in investigating crimes, standing witness and in having their testimony being subjected to the oath is an interesting explanation of their growing alienation from matters of criminal justice. Islamic law which permitted relatives of the dead one to "pardon the offender, or to claim *diya*, blood-money, instead of insisting on retaliation, *kisas*" drew sharp criticism from British officials. For, "the law regulating *kisas* seemed to concentrate too narrowly on 'giving satisfaction' to the heirs of the deceased, instead of the injury to the 'public satisfaction' equated here with the punitive claims of the state" (p. 42).

Upon examining a range of cases and the modifications made from Islamic law to suit British official sensibility, Radhika remarks: "Shifts around the themes of criminal intention, premeditation, and 'mitigating circumstances' began to alter the expectations of parties brought to the criminal courts. In 1793, a regulation in the Bengal Presidency imposed capital punishment for wilful murder, even if the heirs of the deceased had extended a pardon or accepted compensation. . . In 1797 composition was prohibited in all serious crimes. So there was little incentive now for the thief brought to court to offer to make up the loss. This also discouraged victims of theft or robbery from bringing their suspect to trial if they had any hope of persuading or coercing him to repay. These changes in judicial procedure and in judicial

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Dislodging interests which have taken root in the law would call for further exercises in law-making—a process that may, in certain instances, be activated only through law-breaking. In this movement for change, legal history, which explores the dynamics of the law, legal institutions and legitimized power acquires a relevance.

reasoning by which sentences were formulated also changed the expectations with which a prisoner made a confession in court" (pp. 52–53). A marked change, indeed.

The informal acceptance of coerced confessions while retaining a formal unacceptance of torture which Radhika notices (pp. 53–54) is evidence that this hypocrisy has lasted centuries! That a person had to be found guilty, and an offender could not be punished according to "the degree of suspicion of guilt" (p. 55) seems to have given confession a preeminence which, perhaps, led to the tolerance of torture.

Radhika also addresses the complexity of crime within the home, the place of the "poor and the lowly" in criminal law, the changing nature of sentences, and touches upon the treatment of members of 'criminal tribes'.

Her thesis is compelling, and her attention to detail makes it convincing. Work of this kind could assist in understanding where things went wrong, even as it discourages romanticising the systems of the pre-British past.

Sandra Frietag's essay on the Sansiahs and their depiction as a 'criminal tribe' attempts to explain both the oppression of stereotyping as well as the less obvious advantages of being part of a community recognized as such by the state. She concludes with the suggestion that "there may be direct connections between the alternative legal system established under the British for dealing with groups... and the kinds of debates underway now that challenge the claims non-Hindus may make on civil society and the state." (p. 108) I would be curious to see how she builds on this hypothesis.

Arunima's detailing of the effect of "patrifineal encoding of matrilineal custom" (p. 115) sets out the various interventions which whittled away the position, and control, of the woman in the Nayar matrilineal tharavad. It is illustrative of the manner in which centralized systems of decision-making can insinuate dominant prejudices and prescriptions into different modes of life and practice.

The introduction of English law into India, the entrenching of gender inequality in the law, and the use of the transparent and convenient division into religious and secular matters, constitutes the narrative of Archana Parashar's paper on Christian personal law. Even as she says, "(w)hatever the merits of the religious sanctity argument in any other religious personal law, I hope this paper has established that Christian personal law in India was never religious in origin" (p. 164), there is implicit in the paper the position she has taken in her earlier work on family law reform and the Uniform Civil Code of the state's proven capacity to legislate on matters of personal law. What is new is her advocacy for the ground of irretrievable breakdown of marriage. Accompanied by "appropriate matrimonial reform", Archana argues that the ground of irretrievable breakdown will release "a lot of women who are trapped in unhappy marriages" (p. 168). While she has taken on board a number of possible objections to her proposal, there is the further question of the why of irretrievable breakdown having been considered but rejected in the Indian context. This may be particularly relevant since it was the interests of women which were cited while shelving the proposal. Also, the Supreme Court has, on occasion, drawn upon the principle of irretrievable breakdown when dealing with matrimonial issues. It has, in that process, done some apportioning of monies to provide "reasonably" for the woman. It may be useful to study this use of judicial discretion in determining what constitutes irretrievable breakdown and what is a fair arrangement of properties between the parties. Archana's outlining of the issue assumes that it is essentially economic incapacity which compels a woman to stay on in a bad marriage. There also appears to be an assumption that it is women who will find this ground of divorce helpful; an assumption that deserves enquiry.

In Radha Kumar's essay on the life and times of the mill workers in Bombay in the early years of this century, she uses demographic data as a backdrop to interpreting tales of sex and punishment, including stories of adultery and nose-cutting. Relying on newspaper reports and a few reported decisions, Radha Kumar raises a number of intriguing questions which remain unanswered due to the gaps in the reporting of the time. The connectedness between community authority and colonial courts, and their dissimilarities, do however get portrayed in the instances she has picked up.

In setting out the "struggles and dilemmas" of untouchable women, R.S. Khare lets them speak in their own voice of their concerns and complaints. It is an exercise in introducing spoken testimonies to an academic readership.

Moving from issues of justice located in history or in the social context, the last three papers focus on struggle and human rights in times of violent dissent and division. Jani de Silva writes about the response of students to the violence-torn environment in which they live in Sri Lanka. Their views on armed struggle, the responsibilities of the state, and the army response to JVP killings of families of the armed forces, and their anxieties about being "caught in between the scissors of JVP intimidation and state repression" (p. 236) are recorded. He concludes with tossing out this caution: that if "the economic difficulties and lack of employment opportunities that have moved a large number to join movements like the JVP" are not contended with, in the words of a student "in five years time . . . such a movement will rise again" (p. 237).

The "instrumentalist approach to human rights" which Pritam Singh holds has been "the central characteristic of the human rights movement in Punjab" (p. 240), and the sectarianism which both Pritam Singh and Nilanjan Dutta recognize as a problem in the human rights movement, are depicted as challenges that will need to be met. Dutta also makes a pointed reference to "human rights diplomacy" (p. 275) with its corrosion of human rights "as a radical ideology", even as he acknowledges that the institutionalizing of human rights represents a victory for the movement. When Singh says: "Two forms of human rights abuse, namely false police encounters (the killing of political opponents in police custody) and 'disappearances' . . . were largely unheard of during colonial times" (p. 245), it is without question a statement on the pragmatic violence of the Indian state.

It is possible to empathize with the editors when they explain the logic of the widely disparate work presented in this volume as a "rich diversity of themes and regions" which are "best surveyed in a rough chronological order" (p. 6). Yet, the unfulfilled promise of a perspective on South Asia—all papers except one are on India—is a little difficult to forgive.

Usha Ramanathan is a professional law researcher and works in the fields of law and poverty. She has written and published articles on displacement, child labour, water law, disaster and the law, development, human rights and gender related issues.

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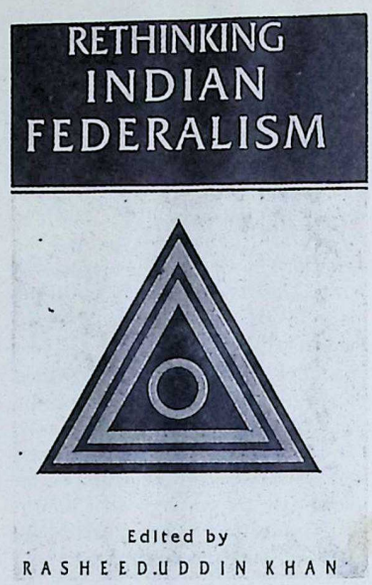
Whither Indian Federalism?

George Mathew

RETHINKING INDIAN FEDERALISM
Edited by Rasheeduddin Khan
Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1997, pp. x + 274, Rs. 350.00

FEDERALISM AND DECENTRALIZATION:CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS IN INDIA AND GERMANY
Edited by Gert W Kueck, Sudhir Chandra Mathur and Klaus Schindler
Mudrit, New Delhi, 1998, pp. xii+284, Rs. 850.00



The federal character of India has been at the centre stage of discussions on India's polity ever since we adopted our Constitution in 1950. Not only have constitutional experts and political scientists but also administrators and experts from every area of the social sciences have written extensively on the subject. But the tallest among these in the last several decades is Rasheeduddin Khan. *Rethinking Federalism* was the last work edited by this eminent political scientist before his death in 1996. He made a remarkable contribution in the area of federalism during his long years in the Jawaharlal Nehru University. He then founded the Centre for Federal Studies at Hamdard University in New Delhi. Both the books are collections of essays on the subject but Rasheeduddin Khan's edited work is the result of a 'Study Week' he had organized at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla in 1993 on Federalism in India. The chapters in the book are almost in the order of the nine study sessions of that week-long programme, which were: (1) federalism in India: quest for a new identity, (2) socio-cultural pluralism: problems of tension and co-ordination, (3) working of India's federal system, (4) recasting Centre-State relations: constitutional and political dimensions, (5) patterns of composite culture in different regions of India, (6) economic and financial dimensions of India's federal polity, (7) secular polity: challenges of communalism, (8) dimensions of caste, class and politics, and (9) regionalism and demand for reorganization of states. However three articles by Harish K. Puri on multi-cultural societies, Aijazuddin Ahmad on Ecology, Regional Differentiation and Cultural Synthesis, and Pradeep Kumar on Centrifugalism in the Indian Federalism were specially contributed for the volume.

The second book looks at Centre-State relations in India and Germany. It contains papers presented at two seminars in Chennai in 1994 and 1996 under the initiative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and in cooperation with the Max Mueller Bhavan, Chennai, Madras Institute of Development Studies, *The Hindu* and *Frontline* as well as the Satyamurti Centre for Democratic Studies.

While "What is Federalism?" by Franz Gress; "Indian Federalism and its Discontents: A Review" by Rajeev Dhavan and Geetanjali Goel and "Federalism in Action: The German Experience" by Hartmut Perschau are papers presented at seminars in Johannesburg in 1992 and 1996, the three papers by German scholars—Joachim Jens Hesse, Christian Starck and Klaus P. Fiedler on various aspects of German federalism are reprints from journals and occasional papers. These two books in more than 30 essays look in depth into the highly debated subject of federalism with reference to India. Although most of these papers were written in the first half of the decade based on contemporary developments in the country, they have lasting value as rich reference works for theory building, policy decisions and further research. Several contributors have included valuable data on India's pluralism, diversity and basic statistics about the Union and the States. It should be mentioned here, however, that some tables are based on data gathered in the 1981 Census. These works also wake us up from our complacency in believing that "anyhow the Republic of India is a stable polity and nothing would happen to shatter its unity" (Khan, p.2) in spite of the serious developments in Punjab, Kashmir, the North-Eastern States or Tamil Nadu. Considering the tensions between the Centre and federating units as well as between unity and manifold diversities, India presents a unique case of federation—'a dialectical amalgam of apparent opposites' or the 'perpetuation of both union and non-centralisation'. Since we are administering a continent as a single country this process gives rise to numerous tensions and contradictions, and with no model to emulate, in the words of Rasheeduddin Khan, "India has to reconstruct itself as a new polity by its own vision and political courage". This is an evolutionary process. It raises the fundamental question: Where is Indian federalism heading to? What is to be done? The two books under review attempt to give answers to these basic questions.

The three main challenges to our efforts to build a new federal polity as identified by Professor Khan are: "(i) inadequate distribution of goods and services, resulting in economic disparity and rampant poverty, (ii) persistence of socio-economic inequality between and within the rural and the urban segments of the people, (iii) political populism and political exploitation by competing parties and groups by pandering to divisive and violent communal, caste and regional sentiments." Unless deliberate action plans are taken to solve these basic issues, the attempts to build a federal structure coalescing India's multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-caste, multi-lingual and multi-regional population will prove to be a futile exercise. The eminent sociologist T.K. Oommen in his theoretical approach argues that in India these problems persist because we treat the State and Nation as coterminous, and the statists hijack the nation in the interests of a section of the people. "The state-nation coterminality is not an empirical fact but a distorted vision or an ideological preference," says Professor Oommen (p.40). Therefore, according to him, it is necessary to unambiguously recognize both the specificity and linkages between the state, nation and ethnicity to build an authentic federal nation. A definite move was taken towards creating an authentic federal nation when all local government institutions—panchayats and municipalities—were brought under Part IX of the Constitution. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, operational since April-June 1993, have brought about radical changes in India's federal structure. By defining the panchayats and municipalities as "Institutions of self-government" the Constitution has recognized another tier of governance at district level and below in addition to the union and states. Unfortunately, the Central and state level political leaders or the bureaucracy at the top level have not recognized this fact with its full ramifications for India's federal structure. Its full implications for that structure must be debated and recognized without any delay. Neither of these books have given adequate attention to this major development.

However, Rajeev Dhavan and Geetanjali Goel's paper on Indian Federalism and its Discontents in *Federalism and Decentralization* deals with it though briefly. Being an eminent constitutional lawyer Dhavan is convinced that the panchayats and municipalities are a 'New Third Tier of Federalism' having impact on the general administrative arrangements, with radical changes in the system of command control and centralized planning. He is convinced that it will affect the federal system in the country. A veteran of the Indian Administrative Service, V. Ramachandran, and a doyen among India's political thinkers, S. Guhan in their contributions raise questions related to the status of panchayati raj and its implementation in the country. The critical question yet to be answered is when Delhi is not decentralizing to the states, why should states decentralize to the local bodies? Guhan puts it succinctly: "The politicians in Delhi are enlightened and are shedding tears for decentralization. . .just as Delhi does not want to decentralize to the state governments and wants to pack them up whenever they refuse to toe the Centre, it is totally understandable that the state governments too do the same with the local bodies" (p.221).

Although India has its own uniqueness it has to learn from other countries as well. In this context the paper 'Local Self-Government in Germany, The Self-Administration of Cities, Towns and Counties' by Klaus P. Fiedler (first published in 1993) is insightful. Local Government as an expression of civic freedom has a long and strong tradition in Germany going back to the middle ages. Local self-government in Germany is credited with laying the foundations of national reconstruction after the devastation of World War II. Feidler writes: "local self-government, in a simple way, gives the citizen scope for an almost day-to-day co-determination and control whether it be conversation with the local councillors, access to zoning and building plans or insights into communal finances. Thus, towns and local governments, in a sense are the state's smallest political cells whose independent and democratic functioning is

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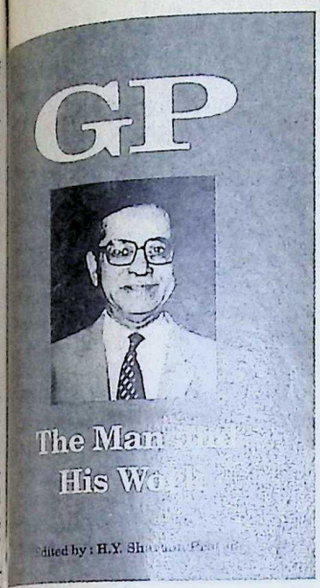
'A Man of Considerable Ability'

S.K. Singh

"GP THE MAN AND HIS WORK"
Edited by H.Y. Sharada Prasad
New Age International, 1998, pp. 385, Rs. 500.00



This is an unostentatious, useful collection of gracious essays about a man of dignity and wisdom.

The first of these, appropriately, is an essay by the President, K.R. Narayanan. Its title "A Quiet Rebel" sums it all. Ambassador Parthasarathi, affectionately known as G.P., even to his own grandsons, was a gentle individual, with a pervasive presence. Nehru once called him "a man of considerable ability". He had pride in India's past and faith in the nation's future. India, he believed, must attain greatness, internationally and internally, by eschewing exclusivity of mind, spirit, or social architecture. GP was both a liberal and a revolutionary.

This book has been edited by H.Y. Sharada Prasad with sensitivity and skill. The tributes at the memorial meeting held in New Delhi in August 1995 soon after GP passed away; the tributes paid at another memorial meeting held in London, and led by the former President, R. Venkataraman; essays in appreciation written by some of GP's friends, admirers and collaborators; and a few selected speeches and writings by GP himself, have been compiled so as to provide the reader an impressionistic picture of GP's personality as a human being, public functionary, diplomat and negotiator, educationist and thinker.

In his life, GP was able to interact closely with a large number of vibrant and interesting personalities—Nehru, Ho Chi Minh, Mao tse Tung, U Thant, Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher, many of whom he could call personal friends, had he been a name dropper. And he lived and functioned during a period in which both India and Asia were evolving rather rapidly and vibrantly.

Some of the more valuable pieces here have been contributed by S. Balakrishnan, Adviser to the Union Home Ministry who assisted GP in his negotiations regarding Kashmir, with Sheikh Abdullah talks with the Mizoram leadership leading to the Mizoram Accord. The two pieces contributed by the Sri Lankan Tamil leaders, Siva Sithambaram and Nilam Tiruchilvam provide a wealth of valuable material on the Indo-Sri Lanka negotiations. A.K. Damodaran's "Foreign Policy Planning and Indian Experience" and H.Y. Sharada Prasad's "During the Indira Gandhi Years" are essays that connect GP's life and times with larger concepts and themes of that era. GP's own speeches reproduced here, unfortunately appear somewhat dated. These were meant for specific occasions, each with a specific purpose, in an era that has passed into history a little too quickly. Many of the concepts of twenty years ago, are no longer relevant and vibrant in a world that has become so comprehensively altered.

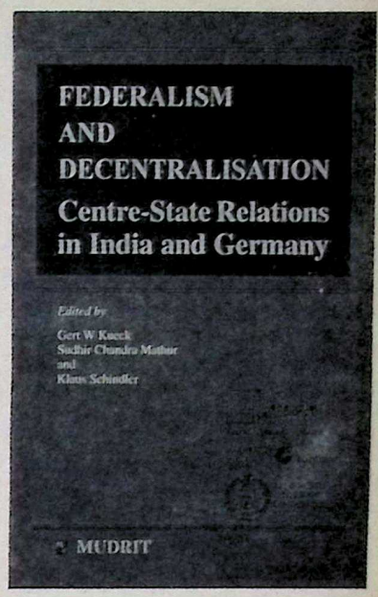
All in all, this is an interesting volume, about an interesting negotiator and political thinker, who possessed both grit and humility.

In his life, GP was able to interact closely with a large number of vibrant and interesting personalities—Nehru, Ho Chi Minh, Mao tse Tung, U Thant, Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher, many of whom he could call personal friends, had he been a name dropper. And he lived and functioned during a period in which both India and Asia were evolving rather rapidly and vibrantly. Colonialism was retreating. The Cold War was tapering off. Most of his contemporaries were, however, unable to see how close we were to the end of the old order. GP, in personal discussions, used to show an awareness of the changes that were impending, and were soon to lead to a major sea-change in the world he and we had known. During his time GP had an impact on a number of evolving situations and succeeded in leaving an imprint of his wisdom and dynamic thinking on some of India's policies.

Having served as Chairman of the International Control Commission in Cambodia and thereafter in Vietnam, as India's Ambassador to China in the 1958–61 period, he was able to observe several facets of the evolving internal, political developments in China (mainly the Cultural Revolution), and the burgeoning of ideological and political tensions between the two giants of the Communist World, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. GP had the sensitivity to see the adverse impact this development could have on China's bilateral relations with India. GP was able also to see the possibility of China drifting into a physical conflict with India.

He had served as our envoy to Indonesia and Pakistan and later as India's Permanent Representative to the U.N. He had a subtle mind, and was, therefore, aware of the coming changes in the power balance in Asia. He developed great sensitivity also to Japan, getting to know the leaders of the country through numerous visits, when U Thant, the U.N. Secretary-General, named him alternate Chairman for establishing the U.N. International University in Tokyo. GP thus became uniquely equipped to comprehend the emerging and evolving Asian power balance.

It is a book that will educate discriminating readers about how India's international relationships have evolved between the era of nonalignment and today's period of globalization. GP was one of those who formed universal values, and did not yield to the greed and consumerism which many countries in today's world accept.



erequisite of freedom and justice in ate and society."

In India, we have miles to go before izens and their local government stitutions achieve this level of coop- tion and `co-determination.' The nchayati raj and autonomous coun- s in West Bengal, Bihar, Jammu and shmir and Assam point to a new ase in our federal evolution—mul- evel federalism. These are positive ovements for the future. A sea-change happening in the political structure the country. For instance, after the mous Bommai case in the Supreme urt, the dismissal of a constitution- y elected Government by the Centre o longer an easy task. In fact, after verdict in the Bommai case, Article has not been used at all, although mous political pressure has been put the Central Government to do so in me cases. The United Front and its mmon Approach paper in 1996 was ther milestone on the road to a new deral structure because it advanced e principles of political, administra- e and economic federalism. The ap- ach paper had said that in the po- cal, administrative and economic eres, "powers will be devolved and thority will be decentralized." In fact, ring the United Front rule Centre- e relations were at their best. The sent trend of sending fact-finding ms to opposition ruled states is not conformity with the emerging posi- e trends for a healthy federalism. No ubt, Indian federalism is on the move, hough temporary difficulties and nfunction are bound to be experi- ed on the way. These two books are luable additions to the ongoing de- e on the current evolutionary phase Indian federalism.

George Mathew is Director, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi.

S.K. Singh, a member of the Indian Foreign Service, was Foreign Secretary (1989–90) and has served on the boards of important international organizations and writes on foreign policy issues in the media.

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State Provokes, Market Reacts

T C A Srinivasa-Raghavan

THE TROUBLE WITH CAPITALISM: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF GLOBAL FAILURE

By Harry Shutt

Zed Books, 1998, pp. 238

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO GLOBALIZATION OF FINANCE

By Kavaljit Singh

Madhyam Books, 1998, pp. 187, Rs. 120

One of the established features of human affairs is that if you predict something for long enough, there will come a time when your predictions come true, it being simply a matter of reiteration and patience. This warning is necessary because, by the sheerest chance, both of the above books have been published at a time when the gravest fears are being expressed about a global slump, possibly even of the sort that overcame the world from 1929 to 1934. Cassandras are rushing about triumphantly with a I-told-you-so look on their faces while apologists defensively hiss from the sidelines that a Great Depression-type calamity is not round the corner.

Harry Shutt belongs to the group which has been warning about the excesses of capitalism, especially of the new, global variety. For those who have followed the debate sympathetically for the last two decades, Shutt's main appeal lies in the way he has marshalled his arguments. Whether one agrees with him or not is not the point. He has presented his case in a persuasive manner and the lay reader, should he be wondering what all the fuss is about, could do worse than to read this book. He will get a perspective which has gone out of fashion. Only, he should bear in mind that this is a rather distorted perspective.

The core of Shutt's argument is that the enormous encouragement given to private capital in recent times, coupled with its natural irresponsibility towards social issues, has created an unstable and inequitous world. The gradual withdrawal of the state from the public stage, says Shutt, has left the world hostage to the greed and caprice of private capital. Add to this the imperatives of modern technology and what has emerged is a potent recipe for global misery and disorder.

As East Asia, Japan, and Russian go on the skids, world commodity prices fall precipitously and global finance turns skittish, darting nervously from one emerging market to another (when it is not seeking the safe haven of US Treasury bonds, that is), Shutt's formulation seems to be not just right but prophetic as well. After all, it was the flight of short-term capital from Thailand last July that led to the Thai crisis which then led to the Indonesian one, which led to the Korean and the Malayasian ones. Then Japan went under, followed by Russia a few weeks ago.

It is natural in these circumstances that a scapegoat be found. International capital and its tendency to take fright easily serve that purpose very well. More than anything else, as President Mahathir has shown, it can be used to draw attention away from the host-government's own failures. Never mind the fact that Thai, Malayasian and Indonesian firms had borrowed recklessly, that the Korean government had no clue of the extent of short term debt and that the Japanese banking system is enough to put even the Indian one to shame. Never mind, too, the fact that the if China had not devalued its currency so aggressively, the East Asians would not have gone under. Never mind all this, just blame it on the symptom. Indeed, so strong is the circumstantial evidence against global capital that even someone as eminent as James Tobin, the Nobel-winning economist, has been talking of a sand-in-the-wheels solution to slow down the mobility of international financial capital.

Not that Shutt has ignored the foibles of governments. He is fully aware of them but his thesis is simply that the nature of global international capitalism is such that, far from acting to dampen the naturally degenerate tendencies of governments, it exacerbates them. When taken by itself, this too sounds right. But it suffers from the usual flaw of all statist arguments: it lets governments and politicians off too lightly. For it can be argued equally convincingly that it is the actions of wayward governments that frighten international capital and if governments would only behave responsibly, global finance would not be so volatile.

It is also not easy to approve of Shutt's prescriptions for a new order. He says that once it is established that the maximization of profits can no longer be a basis for allocation of resources it follows, amongst other things, that:

- Mechanisms for limiting the return on capital ... must be established,
- The State must guarantee private investors against loss of take over the ownership of enterprises,
- The stability of the financial system is a public good.

These and other perscriptions come at the end of the book and are so utterly confused, both in terms of concepts and in terms of practicability—how do you cut the fiscal deficit and still guarantee state pensions to a growing number of old persons? —that one is left wondering whether the effort to read the whole book was worth the while. Then, as one reflects on it, the real problem becomes evident: Shutt has tried to write a political and an economic treatise at the same time, without bothering to keep the essential principles of either political theory or economics in firm view at all times. The result, to say the very least, is most disappointing.

One final point: India has done most of the things that Shutt thinks ought to be done. As a result, it has been saved the embarrassments that have befallen East Asia and Russia. But, as a result, it has also remained desperately poor. Indeed, even at this moment India is following a policy that favours stability rather than growth.

Clearly, the choice is a stark one—do you go for rapid growth and take the risks that are inherent in it as the East Asians did or do you go for stability with low growth even if it means prolonging poverty as it has in India? India has opted for the latter course time and again. But who is to judge that it has acted wisely?

Kavaljit Singh's book is of the same genre as Shutt's but it is wrapped differently. Instead of seeking to find long-winded explanations to fairly straightforward issues, it gives simple answers to complex issues. That is its chief merit. The most interesting chapter, in the current context, is the one which asks if India will go the East Asian way. At least, it would have been if Singh had volunteered some definite answers.

Instead, he is content to warn against financial liberalization because he says that if India does liberalize too rapidly it will almost certainly go the East Asian way. What he forgets is that it went that way in 1991 also, well before liberalization had started. The fault, it would seem, lies not in our stars but in ourselves.

On balance, though, the warnings contained in these two books do deserve to be taken seriously by citizens, if only because it will educate them. But they also need to be told that when it comes to assigning fault between the State and the Market, the evidence against the former is quite overwhelming. Reason: the State provokes, the Market only reacts.

T.C.A. Srinivasa-Raghavan is with the Business Standard.

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Pitfalls of Chasing Mirages

Nalini Nayak

THE GLOBALIZATION OF POVERTY
By Michel Chossudovsky
Distributed in India by the Other India Bookstore, Goa, 1997, pp. 280, Rs. 175.00

This study by Michel Chossudovsky is about the global spread of the capitalist system, this spread having been aided and abetted by the Bretton Woods Institutions. This global expansion has followed certain well-established patterns of development and growth of the capitalist system, which, starting with Marx, many other critics of the capitalist system had talked about. Lenin had talked about imperialism as the highest stage of capitalist development. Lenin's theory of imperialism had talked about the need of the capitalist system to constantly expand into hitherto unconquered territory, particularly after the spread of monopolies hinders the possibilities of further growth within the old islands of capitalist development, i.e. the USA and Europe. For the continuing growth and prosperity of these islands of capitalism, the system had to make use of the cheap labour and resources of the Third World countries. The penetration and opening up of these traditional Third World economies, both as markets for the multinational corporations, and as sources made possible because of the links established between the developed capitalist economies and their erstwhile colonies, during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. The end of World War II saw immense changes taking place in the world, both politically and economically. Politically we saw the end of the colonial system in many countries. This was also a time when socialist ideals and ideology were ascendent, and it was a time of crisis for the capitalist world. It was a time when aspirations for growth and development particularly to tackle the problem of grinding poverty led to experiments with different development models in different parts of the world.

The combination of the need of western developed countries for a global spread of their MNCs, together with the aspirations of particularly the upper and middle classes (the ruling classes in the now independent Third World countries), for the affluent lifestyles of the western world, induced many of the Third World countries to adopt a policy of "opening up" in the eighties and nineties, as against "closed economy" models, which many had earlier tried to follow. The earlier models, many influenced by socialist ideals, had been based on the idea of active government intervention for bringing about economic development. Unfortunately, given the vested interests of the ruling classes many of the countries fell into external and internal debt traps with high fiscal and revenue deficits. Many of these countries in a situation of balance of payments crises, were forced to turn to the IMF and World Bank for assistance. It was in this crisis situation for the Third World countries that the Bretton Woods institutions were able to administer their favoured medicine for the economic ills of these countries. That this medicine also served the interests of the First World was perhaps incidental!

Michel Chossudovsky has tried to show to what extent the prosperity of the First World rests on the poverty of the Third World. The "stabilization" policies thrust on the Third World governments—forcing governments to withdraw from the social sectors, reduce subsidies, withdraw essential government support to important sectors of the economy—all in the name of allowing a free market economy to develop, results in the impoverishment of large sections of the population.

The book by Chossudovsky is divided into five parts. The first part studies the impact of the policy menu on the spread of poverty in Third World countries. The instruments of control (the loan conditionalities) used by the IMF and World Bank to force the Third World governments to accept and follow policy recommendations of the international institutions. This, in fact, results in the development of the "Cheap Labour Economies", the benefits of this impoverishment of the working classes of the Third World going to the First World in the form of cheap products.

Parts II, III, IV and V are actual case studies from all over the world, starting with Sub-Saharan Africa. He looks at the two recent crisis areas (Somalia and Rwanda) and tries to analyse the real reasons for the famine, and the economic genocide in Rwanda, which came about as a direct consequence of the IMF "Shock Therapy" and resulted in the destruction of an economy based on the export of coffee.

He looks at other examples of the IMF "Shock Therapy" where the same menu of devaluation (to cope with balance of payments crises) and macroeconomic stabilization policies has been applied—South and South-east Asia, Latin America, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. In each case the IMF medicine has resulted in the impoverishment of large sections of the population. The recent crisis in the "Asian Tigers" no doubt would have resulted in the addition of several "case studies" to the ones which are already a part of this book.

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Environmental History?:
Whatever Happened to Colonialism

Rohan D'Souza

NATURE AND THE ORIENT: THE ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

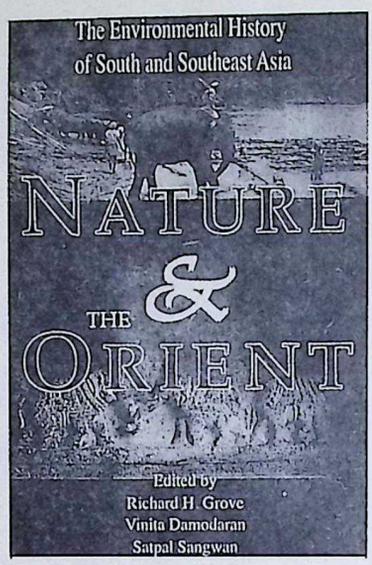
Edited by Richard H. Grove, Vinita Damodaran and Satpal Sangwan

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp.1036, Rs. 1250.00

ECOLOGY, CLIMATE AND EMPIRE: THE INDIAN LEGACY IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY 1400-1940

Edited by Richard H. Grove

Oxord University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 237, Rs. 395



Undoubtedly, the impact of environmental degradation on the entire web of life evokes some of the most critical global concern in the twilight years of this century. Not only is the scale of the present 'ecological crisis' unprecedented in human history but it has also engendered qualitatively new forms of resource scarcities and inequities. Though human abuse of the environment has ancient roots with even whole civilizations being virtually extinguished because of unsustainable practices, the current crisis is unique in its global dimension and for the threat it now poses to several complex and fragile, ecological processes that sustain the totality of life on earth.

The irreversible erosion of some of the basic environmental infrastructure of the planet is sharply skewed in its impact with the poorest and the marginalised populations bearing the brunt. The main beneficiaries of this global political economy that facilitates this unequal distribution of the burdens of environmental degradation have, not surprisingly, sought to privilege their diagnosis and version of the problem above that of the actual truth. Consequently, the cutting edge of 'environmentalism' has been selectively directed against 'demographic pressures' or at preserving pristine biotically rich and diverse zones in the tropics, without engaging decisively with the problems of unsustainable consumption patterns or challenging the sanctity of 'private property'

The origins of today's ecological crisis can in fact be largely traced to the rise, growth and consolidation of capitalism, which attained a significant maturity and intensity by the early half of the nineteenth century. The unfurling of capitalism not only resulted in the drastic reorganization of the environment in the core regions of its emergence but more significantly reshaped the ecologies of its colonies in the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In its drive to acquire raw materials to feed its industry and then later to capture markets, capitalism soon battered the 'Chinese walls' of pre-capitalist formations and debilitated and shattered 'natural economies' until it reordered the world in its own image. To quote Marx:

> "The bourgeoise, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?"[1]

Capitalism, however, must not be conceived off as a single homogenous unchanging system; rather it was and is an evolving context that constantly revolutionises productive forces, social relations and its technological basis. Consequently, the different stages of capitalism, never distinguishable in an absolute sense but by dominant features, subjected the natural world to varying pressures at different periods of time. Similarly the modern colony—the subordinate complement of the capitalist economy—underwent changes linked to the altering forms of surplus expropriation and the manner in which the transfer of tribute/surplus to the metropolitan centre was enabled. The natural world of the colonies, therefore, was impacted upon in varying intensities throughout the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century.

It is in the backdrop of this complex of events and conjunctures that the two books under review should be situated. *Nature and the Orient* and *Ecology, Climate and Empire* are timely additions to the growing and necessary studies on the history of resource (ab)use and the as yet limited explorations into the nature of the colonial impact on the environment. The former comprises 31 essays spanning a range of studies on forests, mining, attitudes to the environment, hunting etc. in South and Southeast Asia; while the latter is a relatively modest collection of Grove's essays elaborating upon his now familiar perspective.[2]

For our purpose, however, it is, necessary to whittle down the review of the several essays in *Nature and the Orient* to a manageable theme—forestry. This theme is covered in 18 essays, with only two of them dealing with the pre-colonial period. Thus, *Nature and the Orient* affords us the possibility of assessing an important aspect of the colonial impact over a vast region essentially through the turns and twists of colonial forest policy and the strategies for its management and control. Not unexpectedly, the essays range across a spectrum of positions.

At one end can be placed Ravi Rajan's study of what he terms as the tradition of Continental forestry and its determining influence on forest policies in colonial India. Continental forestry arose in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century in response to the new industrial demands of the state. Through a series of initiatives the practitioners of Continental forestry evolved an entirely new regime of control over the forests, which now privileged and legitimated the needs of industry over that of the subsistence needs of agriculturists. Soon France, compelled by similar exigencies and the need to overcome a shortfall in timber that was vital for ship building, imbibed and imitated the German experience and set up their own specialist school on forestry at Nancy. In time Continental forestry effectively replaced forms of communal forest management, limited the access of communities to forage, pasturage, gleaning and coppicing and most significantly turned forests into an aspect of the national infrastructure to be used primarily for the benefit of the state.

Ravi Rajan then contends that the technocratic elite of forest managers that arose in the course of developing a new regime of forest control became an interest group of sorts, with their own agenda. In due course foresters from colonial India who were imbued and schooled in this tradition unhesitatingly transplanted the ideas of Continental forestry into the Indian subcontinent. In effect, while the specific political economy of Europe determined and shaped its forest policy, in colonial India a community of technocrats and professionals trained in Continental forestry set the agenda for 'colonial forestry.' Thus, the colonial state did not have a distinct policy towards forest control that was borne out of its own unique and particular requirements. By implication colonial economic and political imperatives did not impinge on 'colonial forestry'.

This line of reasoning is in comfortable agreement with the perspective advanced by Richard Grove, who has argued that colonial forest policies with a strong conservationist agenda was essentially dictated and formulated by groups of professional scientists. While we will debate the validity of this claim in a later section of the essay (when we discuss *Ecology, Climate and Empire*), it is important to highlight that this view basically dismisses or underplays the agency of colonialism. Secondly, it attributes a decisive influence to the realm of ideas while simultaneously diluting the implications of material processes.

Practices and developments on the ground, however, convey a very different, if not opposite, impression. In the first half of the nineteenth century much of the East India Company's attention was directed at securing teak for ship building. The west coast stretching from Gujarat in the North to the rich evergreen Malabar forests in the south was particularly marked for such extraction. In the district of North Canara the early Marine and Revenue departments of the Company were chiefly concerned with securing a continuous supply of teak for the Bombay dock-yards

[1] K. Marx & F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p.48.

[2] See R.H. Grove, *Green Imperialism*, OUP, Delhi, 1995.

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Marlene Buchy). By the mid-nineteenth century the emphasis shifted towards meeting the demands of the fast-expanding railway network. Teak and certain kinds of junglewood were now extracted for railway sleepers. Throughout this period the limit of exploitability was determined not by objective botanical considerations' but in response to the needs of the market. Similarly, deciduous patches in the wet evergreen forests of the western ghats, which abounded in teak, blackwood, Catechu (*Acacia catechu*) and Kino (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), were systematically worked to supply British shipbuilding, military cantonments, factories and the inevitable railways (M.D. Subash Chandran). In the Central Provinces as well, with its then significant reserves of teak (*Tectona grandis*) and Sal (*Shorea robusta*), the needs of railway construction hastened the denudation of some of the largest deciduous forests in the subcontinent (Mahesh Rangarajan). Such unremitting timber extraction, predominantly for railway sleepers, was also carried out in Chotanagpur (Vinita Damodaran) and in the emerald island of Ceylon (Eric Meyer).

Ironically, it was precisely the hunger for timber and the critical need to nurture sources of its supply that provoked the colonial state to initiate a regime for forest conservation and commercially oriented silviculture. By 1865, with the appointment of Dietrich Brandis as the first Inspector General of Forests in India and the subsequent elaboration of the forest bureaucracy, a new orientation acquired momentum—'Scientific Forestry'. The idea of restraint that this term appears to convey, however, was not necessarily realized on the ground. Forest conservation in its earliest incarnation did not significantly change the emphasis on revenue generation or compromise the needs of the colonial state i.e. it was not merely about saving trees from the axe but often about the appropriation of resources for the government' (Mahesh Rangarajan).

The most substantial impact of 'scientific forestry' was transmitted into local communities which depended on forests for their various needs. Forests were now demarcated into three zones—Reserved, Protected and Unclassified. While in the first type the local populace was entirely excluded to enable timber growth, in the remaining two they were often grudgingly allowed circumscribed access. In the Dangs belt in Gujarat, scientific forestry operated to rigorously deny local communities access to forests far more systematically than earlier conservation ideas and practices in the region. All the working plans for forest management were directed at denuding the protected forests while conserving timber in the reserved forests. In the long run several areas in the Dangs became virtual teak monocultures (Ajay Scaria). In the Western ghats from the 1860s onwards pressure was mounted to stop shifting cultivation (Kumri), a practice which was presumed to threaten teak supplies. In 1890, with the exception of a few villages, Kumri was virtually ended thereby undermining the livelihood of a large number of cultivators. While working plans of the forest administration increasingly regimented local access to fuelwood, wild fruit, pasture and other forest produce, the extraction of timber and hardwood species for export was sustained at high levels (M.D. Subash Chandran).

The importance of forest produce for the local economy cannot be overstated. According to one account in Chota Nagpur:

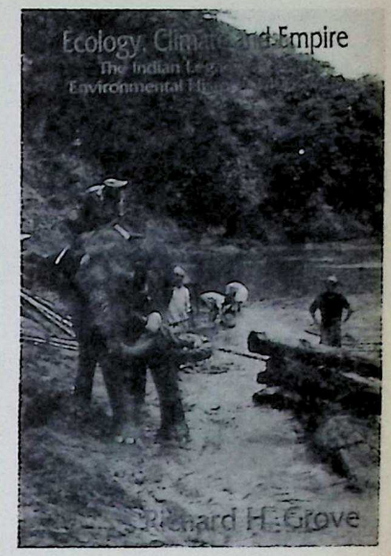
> "21 species of seed and fruits of 45 uncultivated trees... were used as food in addition to 34 trees the leaves of which were used as vegetables and 18 species of edible roots...97 forest products used as medicines, 28 used as oils and gums, 17 used as dyes and 33 creepers or barks of trees used as rope fibres (p.857)."

In Chota Nagpur, the erosion of forest rights in conjunction with the denudation of the forests, not unexpectedly, became important factors in causing the famine conditions of 1897 in the region (Vinita Damodaran). Tensions naturally flared up and various forms of protests against colonial forest policies intensified in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Indra Munshi Saldana's essay documents several such agitations in the Thana district (Maharashtra), provoked clearly by the need of the local populace to increase their access to the forests. While the colonial state was compelled to respond to such popular pressure and renegotiate or even retreat on instances, its revenue imperative and economic agenda was seldom severely compromised. Secondly, 'local communities' and the 'local populace' were themselves now reconstituted by the colonial context. New forms of property, the corrosive effects of the market and deeper circuits of trade were violently churning the old social order small cultivators, poor peasants and tribals. Thus, forest loss did not impact uniformly on the 'local community' nor did the occasional easing off of the demands of the colonial state benefit the various strata equally. The worst sufferers inevitably were the tribals and small cultivators. The new social order and imbricating moneylenders, landlords and contractors atop moreover defined itself vis-a-vis the depleted forests in new and often unsustainable ways (Indra Munshi Saldana & Vinita Damodaran).

Two caveats are in order. First, despite the obviously enormous needs for timber and the fairly well documented extraction agendas of the colonial state in India, the evidence of forest loss is essentially qualitative.[3] Upto at least 1880, no accurate or even acceptable figures can be advanced to account for actual forest loss. For several reasons this complicates the study of colonial forest history. While the non-existence of reliable statistics for most of the nineteenth century is certainly a limitation, the elaboration of a colonial forest bureaucracy from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and the specific ends to which it was made to work is fairly well documented. Consequently, circumstantial evidence of forest loss within a valid framework can still enable studies to trace a pattern of colonial intent and strategy. Second, the colonial obsession for timber, correspondingly slanted the nature of the documentation. Thus, a vast majority of the forest products generally listed under Minor Forest Produce (MEP), escaped systematic scrutiny. It is probable that MEP, especially where mixed forests existed, did not become a source of contest in many regions (Richard Tucker). The teak-centred attitude moreover, propelled the Forest and civil administration to develop classificatory systems that degraded all forms of forest activities which they considered harmful to timber growth. Shifting cultivation especially was widely criticized and for a considerable period held to be destructive to the forest ecology. M.D. Subash Chandran's essay on Kumri argues the reverse and suggests that shifting cultivation in the western ghats was not only not a vagrant form of cultivation but was evolved as a form of land use to circumvent major problems of tropical agriculture like soil erosion, low nutrient status and pest pressure.

Clearly, the evidence in the majority of the essays suggest that revenue agendas determined colonial forest policy and economic exigencies rather than ideology dictated forest practices. In effect, colonial forestry can more insightfully be studied as an aspect of colonial history (Mahesh Rangarajan & Marlene Buchy).[4]

The above proposition, however, stands in contrast to Grove's general line of argument in *Ecology, Empire and Climate*. The collection of essays in the volume explore colonial 'discourses' on deforestation, climate change and conservation between 1500–1940. According to Grove the European encounter with the environment in the colonies in the earliest years of mercantilistic expansion resulted in the proliferation of a school of experts who carefully monitored and documented processes of ecological degradation especially in the tropics. Termed as 'desiccasionists'—a set of ideas characterized by the assertion that there was a causal connection between forest depletion and phenomena like droughts or soil erosion—these precursors to the modern day environmentalists soon translated their alarmist perceptions into a veritable programme for conservation.



In time, with the gradual accumulation of details on tropical environments and more significantly on 'indigenous and traditional' precepts on resource management the desiccasionists, by the early decades of the nineteenth century began to shift the levers of colonial state policy. Official fears of famine and agrarian failure had by then already been stoked to make most of the colonial governments peculiarly amenable to implementing conservation agendas. In sum, the principal motive for colonial forestry was the government's concern about the consequences of environmental degradation, which it concluded could also snowball into anxieties of rule.

Grove while thus underplaying the implications of colonial revenue and economic imperatives on forestry argues that ideas on 'conservation' were a determining influence. It is perhaps of some significance that much of Grove's reasoning stems from the nature of the sources he has chosen to consult. It is probable that in the rarefied discourses of 18th and 19th century scientific ideas and pronounce-

[3] I owe this insight to Bela Malik.

[4] Also see Ramchandra Guha, *Unquiet Woods*, OUP, Delhi, 1989.

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ments, the material foundations of colonialism appeared obscure. Events on the ground, however, as documented in forest and civil administration directives and in the malodorous tedium and minutiae of their functioning, reveal that colonial forestry was substantially oriented towards meeting its revenue targets and other needs of the state.

Secondly, the ability of a group of professionals to play upon the 'fears' of the colonial state and steer it against the interests of 'short term private capital' raise very critical questions not only about the nature of the colonial state but more fundamentally about the equilibrium of forces that sustained it. Undoubtedly, the colonial state was the best agency for implementing colonial policies, but it did not and could not have functioned in an economic and political vacuum. Moreover how 'short term' was the need for railway sleepers?

The political weight of economic forces also cannot be underestimated. In Ceylon, to take one example, despite almost several decades of studies exposing the deleterious effects of plantation economies on the soil, the government could respond with measures only in 1931 when a depression created a slump in plantation products and thereby weakened the planters (Eric Meyer's essay in *Nature and the Orient*). The rhetoric of conservation therefore must be distinguished from the substance of state policy.

It is the failure to explain the phenomenon of colonialism that similarly clouds the editors' introduction in *Nature and the Orient*. For one, Mughal, British, French and Dutch 'imperialisms' are lumped together. While one need not debate here the differences between pre-capitalist forms of state and those that were assembled through the processes of colonialism, it nevertheless is important to underline that the two involved very distinct forms of property and rule.[5] Formal similarities in areas of forest management do not necessarily constitute continuities.[6] No doubt the nature of colonial rule was complex and the narrative of a pre-colonial golden age needs to be imploded. Having set this agenda, why construct a new orthodoxy of continuities?

Rohan D'Souza has just submitted his Ph.D. thesis at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

[5] Marx & Engels, *On Colonialism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976. Irfan Habib, 'Colonization of the Indian Economy' in idem(ed), *Essays In Indian Historiography*, Tulika, Delhi, 1995. And also see A.K. Bagchi, 'Towards a Correct Reading of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism', in P. Patnaik (ed.) *Lenin and Imperialism*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1986.

[6] This is argued in the section on forest settlements in Neeladri Bhattacharya, 'Colonial State and Agrarian Society' in S. Bhattacharya and R. Thapar(ed.) *Situating Indian History*, OUP, Delhi, 1986.

Debate on the Future of India's Forests

Mahesh Rangarajan

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INDIAN FORESTS

Edited by Roger Jeffery

Manohar Books, New Delhi, 1998, pp.188, Rs.400.00

GREENING AT THE GRASSROOTS, ALTERNATIVE FORESTRY STRATEGIES IN INDIA

Edited by Eva Cheung Robinson

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp.144, Rs.250(cloth), Rs.145(paper)

The debate on the future of India's forests is now as lively in the ranks of academia as among activist groups, policy makers and the media. One of the refreshing aspects of this development is that there is a profusion of studies on various facets of the relationship between forests and people. In the social sciences, this has expanded beyond the study of forest-based movements and government policies to the wider patterns of land ownership and utilization and the multiple ways in which culture interacts with nature. The one common thread is that there is now little doubt that what the forest or a forest means to one person or group of persons is radically different from what it means to another. The clash of will is itself a major a force in reshaping not only the extent of forest cover but who controls access to it. Barely a decade after the publication of Ram Guha's work on Uttarakhand, the cluster of works now at hand throws light on the regional specificity of the ecological question. Keeping these particular features of different regions of the subcontinent is vital to get past sweeping generalisations.

Eva Cheung Robinson's work is particularly useful in this light. Her focus is on the success and failure of social forestry schemes in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. India's efforts at reforestation have largely been concerned with meeting urban or industrial demand for fuel or raw materials. But by the early 1980s, there were efforts to remedy this by concentrating considerable effort and energy at meeting rural needs, in particular those of the rural poor. Of course fashions in the development set and among bureaucrats change with the times. Today it is not social forestry but joint forest management that is the rage of the day. Yet, knowing when and under what conditions the former can or cannot work is more essential than is often acknowledged. Robinson estimates that the World Bank and other donor agencies channeled over 900,000 US dollars for social forestry between 1980 and 1991.

The problem lay in the very objectives of the programme, which sought only to complement the existing regimes of production forestry on woodlands controlled by the Forest Department. In effect, the imperial legacy of forestry oriented for a narrow sector was sought to be reinforced rather than subverted.

The choice of Andhra Pradesh is significant. The state has the largest spread of forests after Madhya Pradesh. The Forest Department controls a vast area of no less than 64,000 square kilometers, much of it Reserved Forest. It has substantial populations of tribals and includes critical if often neglected forests as in the Eastern Ghats. It is notable that Furer von Haimendorf not only worked in the territories of the former Nizam but also helped formulate some of the early schemes that sought to check the destruction of forests while ensuring the amelioration of tribals.

Despite the limitations of the social forestry project as a whole, some voluntary groups were able to utilise the space it provided to reforest some tracts of land: Here, the book is finely balanced, for it shows a keen awareness of both the constraints attendant upon and the potential of such constructive work efforts. The social forestry programme was very much a creature under the direct aegis of the Forest Department as a whole. It was not, in that sense, even a reformist measure. Though over 20 crore seedlings and saplings were distributed to farmers, the species supplied by the nurseries were rarely those desired by villagers. All too often, as in Mahbubnagar, the locale and the species were decided upon by foresters as these were seen as solely 'technical questions'. Yet, the success stories, limited as they were, do give ground for some hope.

In Zaheerabad, women were involved from the very outset, partly because the Conservator was progressive and open-minded. But his work was greatly facilitated by a voluntary group which mobilised opinion. Yet, even here, the ownership rights of the trees

planted under the programme remained unclear. In the absence of clear title to the potential beneficiaries, in this case through tree pattas to the women, success will be a distant goal not a real option. The detailed studies include two sites in the dry region of Rayalseema. This was and is a denuded landscape, bereft of large groves or stands of trees. Each of the voluntary groups involved was different in terms of its origins and interests. In Kadiri, it was under the umbrella of Myrada, an organisation with a commendable record in resettling Tibetan refugees. Micro-level land management and mobilisation of credit were the keys to success. By contrast, the Girijan-Backward Sangh in a part of Cuddapah was more top-down in its manner of functioning and had to revise its earlier approach. A Gandhian group called Gord took up similar problems in the Guntur district. These three cases show there is a diversity of cultures even among voluntary groups.

Robinson's field level work is of greater interest than the summaries of the debates of 'colonial' knowledge systems. There is ample room, she argues, for a different kind of forestry oriented to subsistence and income generation. The planting of trees useful for fruit, food and savings was common to all the three sites. The key also lay in assessing the worth of trees for the really disadvantaged sections and ensuring they controlled this form of wealth. Women, for instance, often had a scale of priorities that only partially overlapped even with male members of their households.

Robinson's work is especially useful due to the meticulous attention to detail. It would have gained immensely had she embellished it with more ecological information on the topography, soil and the kinds of flora that recover when land is closed for biomass extrac-

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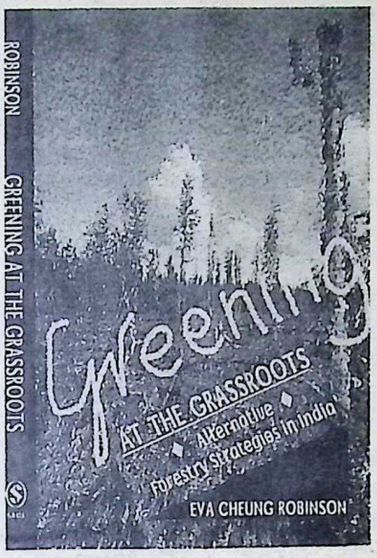
...But this is a significant and in-...ghtful study.

Many of the issues touched upon by ...binson are examined in some of the ...says in the volume edited by Jeffery. ...t the scope and scale of the book is ...uch wider. It includes two provoca-...ve, if brief pieces on the relationship ...forests and culture. Dubiansky traces ...e importance of forest symbolism in ...mil textual sources. There is large ...rpus of writings of the opposition in ...ssical Sanskrit texts between the ...orlds of the aranya or forest and that ...f the grama or village. Tamil sources ...unt not only to oppositions but to ...nnections as in the imagery of two ...rties with distinctly non-Aryan roots, ...namely Murugan and Valli. Bhatta-...harya shows how modern Bengali ...riters from Bankim to Mahasveta Devi ...ve used the forest both as a metaphor ...nd a setting for their tales. For the ...rmer, the forest is a desolate place, ...e setting for a melancholy love tale ...nd for the latter it is a site of hope due ...o the uprisings of peoples of the forest.

But the volume really picks up pace ...ith the studies of folk religion and its ...lation to conservation. The sacred ...oves of the Western Ghats have, for ...er a quarter century become a sym-...ol and rallying point for many who ...ant to move beyond a static model of ...rotection towards an indigenous and ...re rooted idea of conservancy. Kalam ...unds a note of caution, documenting ...e decline and collapse of many such ...vara kadus in the Coorg region of ...arnataka. While not absolving the ...resters from their share of damage, ...e reminds us how several such groves ...ere denuded when they were under ...e control of the Revenue Department. ...reeman's research on Malabar is more ...harply critical of religion-based mod-...s of conservation. He clearly maps ...e ritual and cultural significance of ...rtain practices, which were not, as is ...metimes imagined, a homeostatic ...evice to maintain the ecosystem. In ...ct, many of the local inhabitants of the ...ea welcome the influx of Christian ...lanters because the latter have wiped ...t large wild animals that were earlier ...n object of fear.

It is not possible to do justice to all ...e papers in the book. But a brief men-...on may still be useful. Linkenbach's is ...n account of a Garwhal village and the ...s physical use of mountain terrain and ...s changing cultural significance for ...e resident. He too warns of how wider ...economic changes are undermining ...lder bonds with nature.

Madsen looks at one of the more ...contentious conflicts around grazing ...access rights in the bird sanctuary near ...Bharatpur in Rajasthan. He shows how ...there was little unanimity among sci-



entists and officials on banning grazing, but it was nevertheless pushed through resulting in police firings in November, 1982 and the deaths of villagers. Madsen is factually inaccurate in reporting that leopards have been introduced into the Borivili park near Mumbai: they naturally occur and continue to breed in the area in the shadow of the metropolis. What the writer does not tell us about the Bharatpur case is crucial: foresters refused to let scientists from the Bombay Natural History Society conduct experiments in the wetland to measure whether and if cattle grazing was indeed damaging the ecosystem. Madsen's work is one of the few case studies anywhere of conflicts around Protected Areas where the conservation values of wildlife are given top priority. Unlike in the wider case of forest management, the debate around these areas and who ought to control them is still at a nascent stage.

The last two papers are by Potter and Jewitt. The former finds that voluntary groups in Karnataka have been more influential in the implementation stages of Joint Forest Management than in policy making. Until now, the programme itself has been severely limited in scope partly due to the unwillingness of foresters to extend it to much of the land under their control. Jewitt looks at a region well known for forest based and tribal movements. Though hopeful about joint management, she cautions that the process must emanate from the grass roots and not be imposed from above.

The book does succeed in shedding light on what is often 'a battle over which of the possible meanings of the forest is to have priority'. It steers a careful middle ground, illustrating how the government is itself often a house divided and civil society in turn is hardly unified on the forests question. This is even so in areas and among peoples who are sometimes romantically seen as eco-friendly.

Two caveats are perhaps necessary. There is less in the book than one might have imagined on the importance of the colonial period or on the implications of forest movements and how they have raised afresh the connections between equity and ecology. Secondly, it is perhaps reflective of a larger gap in social science work on ecological questions but one shared by many contributors: they take the social dimension to be so crucial that the sense of the dynamics of nature almost disappears from view. The kinds of regeneration that occur in a particular region and the conditions under which it can proceed or is hindered from taking place is an issue much more central to the validity or otherwise of many of the papers. It is hardly dealt with adequately. This should not detract from the value of this work. Jeffery hints at how vital it is to distinguish between 'different visions of the forest' and to keep this in mind even when dealing with newly current ideas like joint forest management. Often the latter masks deep and unresolved issues of who will control the forest and for what.

Mahesh Rangarajan is a Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

Letter from London

Stephen Moss

Money is an awkward subject for writers. After all, aren't they supposed to be above all that, geniuses living for their art and slowly starving to death in a garret? Serious money means non-serious literature: leave that to Grisham and Clancy, Archer and Danielle Steel.

Well, maybe. There was a celebrated spat in the UK a couple of years ago when Martin Amis switched agents and secured for himself an advance of pounds 500,000 from Harper Collins for his novel, *The Information*. A.S. Byatt, literary grand dame and former Booker Prize winner, announced that this would not do at all: it was shoddy commerce, a prostitution of the writer's art, the triumph of Mammon. Other writers took sides and the battle ended in stalemate.

The issue has been reawakened recently by a clever anthology assembled by the booksellers Waterstone's. They repeated an exercise first undertaken in 1946 by the critic and novelist Cyril Connolly, who asked a selection of prominent authors how much a 'serious writer needed to live on whether this could be earned by writing, what a suitable second occupation would be, whether a writer suffered by undertaking other employment, whether the state should do more for writers, and what advice they would give to aspiring writers.

As the novelist Alain de Botton points out in his introduction to the new anthology, entitled *The Cost of Letters*, these subjects were of deep and abiding interest to Connolly, who saw money worries as the principal "enemy of promise". Connolly was forever dreaming up notions to alleviate his and other writers' financial woes: "I should like to see a custom introduced of readers who are pleased with a book sending the author some small cash token: anything between half-a-crown and a hundred pounds. Authors would then receive what their publishers give them as a flat rate and their 'tips' from grateful readers in addition."

Connolly's interest in the subject led him to commission a survey for *Horizon*, the literary magazine he edited, of other writers, among them John Betjeman, Robert Graves, George Orwell and Stephen Spender. Orwell was typically to the point. How much does a writer need to live on? (This is 1946, remember.) "I think pounds 10 a week after income tax for a married man, pounds 6 a week for an unmarried man." Can a serious writer earn this sum by writing? "No, I am told that at most a few hundred people in Great Britain earn their living solely by writing books, and most of those are probably writers of detective stories." What is the most suitable second occupation for a writer? "Something non-literary . . . I can just imagine, for instance, a bank clerk or an insurance agent going home and doing serious work in his evenings, whereas the effort is too much to make if one has already squandered one's energies on semi-creative work such as teaching, broadcasting or composing propaganda for bodies such as the British Council." (Betjeman's preferred second occupation was characteristically delightful: "I would like to be a stationmaster on a small country branch line —single track.")

Betjeman's succinct reply to the question "how much does a writer need to live on"—"As much as anyone

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else""—is echoed by many current practitioners. Take Jonathan Coe: "At the time of writing, the average yearly income for full-time employment in Great Britain is pounds 19,115. I don't see why writers should expect any less than that. Most of them deserve a good deal more."

Other contributors are more demanding: the biographer Michael Holroyd reckons pounds 70,000 would do, the novelist Will Self plums for 40,000-80,000 pounds. Hilary Mantel is wittily facetious: "In an ideal world, all published writers would be as rich as Croesus. They could then indulge in dissipation and eccentricity on a scale the public has a right to expect... There must be sufficient money for champagne to cheer up friends whose work is rejected, and for postage stamps to return unsolicited manuscripts. To engage the interest of the Sunday papers, it is necessary to build up a big drug habit. Female writers absolutely must not be seen to dress out of Marks & Spencer. Also, writers who venture abroad must always travel fist class and stay at the best hotels. Otherwise, they encounter hazards and hardships, write very dull books about them, and become a burden to the spirit."

So, can they earn enough to live as a "serious" writer? Few of the respondents question what is meant by serious here—a subject worth a book in its own right—but let that pass. The consensus seems to be that you can earn enough, but for how long? Tales of former literary stars now dependent on the hospitality of the Salvation Army abound. Julian Barnes sums it up neatly: "You would have to be exceedingly vain or foolish to set up as a writer and think that your art will sustain you until death. When I started reading seriously, Angus Wilson was one of our most acclaimed literary novelists. By the time I became a writer myself he was a knight. Not long afterwards, I remember being asked to contribute to an emergency fund to help sustain him".

A salutary tale—and an indication that, if nothing else, the Government should consider giving writers tax breaks to help them cover the long, low-earning fallow periods in their careers; their pattern of earning is likely to be more erratic than most. The majority of writers surveyed here are against direct state subsidy—"The state should leave writers alone", says Michael Ignatieff trenchantly—but a more helpful tax regime, along the lines of that which assists writers in Ireland, wins a good deal of support. More money for libraries and an increase in the public lending right fund are also mooted as practical ways to help writers. Arguing that too much mediocre work is produced, Will Self suggests cash payments to authors if they agree not to write. Well, that principle seems to be acceptable in agriculture...

The most interesting answers are those in response to the question, "What would be the most suitable second occupation for a serious writer?" Many of these writers affect to despise journalism (which doesn't, of course, stop quite a number of them practising it to boost their incomes). Jonathan Coe declares that "Literary journalism... is not good for the soul". Hilary Mantel agrees: "Journalism is convenient. The danger is that you become, as Stevenson said, 'wedded to cheap finish'." One understands what they mean, but the great writers of the 18th century, those founders of the modern novel, managed to be fine journalists and polemicists without it undermining their novelistic endeavours.

So if not journalism, what? Sebastian Faulks reminds us that "Henry Green worked satisfactorily in the family business making lavatory seats, but few such openings exist today". What can he mean? A.S. Byatt advocates gardening—"quiet, physical, thoughtful and interesting", Hilary Mantel suggests becoming a fortune teller or estate agent; Alasdair Gray cautions that "prostitution should be avoided when possible"; and Michael Ignatieff reminds us that "Kafka dreamed of being a waiter at a beach-front restaurant in Tel Aviv". Er, yes, thanks for that thought.

Many of the respondents agree that a non-literary second occupation is better than a para-literary one: Melvyn... was far better off doing a spot of wha... ing, runs this line of argument, tha... say, compiling crosswords for the Ne... *York Times*. "Writers are definitely im... poverished by remaining incarcerate... in their word-processor garrets, "say... Beryl Bainbridge. "After a time, co... stops meeting or knowing norma... people."

That's a fairly common view—tha... writers should get a life, meet "real" people and try to understand them. It is also rather simplistic and probably wrong-headed. As Melvyn Bragg says: "It depends on the writer. You can construct any case you want by taking models from the past." Michael Holroyd is wonderfully dismissive of the 'get a life' school of literary criticism: "Except possibly for a few sequestered academic writers, we have a perfectly good grasp of the world. We know about love and death, passion and grief simply by being alive." Lucy Ellmann is equally wary of the argument that a second occupation can enrich your writing: "A novelist's time is best spent learning how to write novels or drinking martinis." Always assuming you can afford them, of course.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of the Guardian.

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A Saga of Loves and Lusts

Arundhati Ghose

THE DOGS OF JUSTICE
By Nina Sibal
Ravi Dayal, Delhi, 1998,
pp. 320, Rs. 225.00

Nina Sibal's latest offering *The Dogs of Justice* purports to be a legacy to her daughter, a legacy of her loves and lusts. Yet the character of the protagonist Shahnaz is most of the time viewed from the outside—indeed, the feeling I got on reading the book which I virtuously and painfully completed, is of a series of puppetshows set against a backdrop of a montage of newspaper clippings from western newspapers about India... the Partition, mixed up with the more recent insurgency in J&K, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, and the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Even those characters on which she spends some time, and there are a plethora of them, seem like caricatures, stereotypes, than real people. It has been called a book about passion—to me, there is a difference between passion and everyday humdrum lust. Innocent bystanders die horrible deaths and Shahnaz, whenever she does appear, appears to want to take the responsibility as a badge of honour to her rather banal sexual relations. Perhaps I am being too harsh, but one expected much more sensitivity from Nina Sibal.

To start even with the title—from where does the metaphor emanate? Her identification with a Kashmiri poetess is unconvincing, anyone can identify with anyone, that is of course their freedom of choice, but Habba Khatun sang and died for her love of one man; Shahnaz, daughter of Mr. Hamidkhan, IFS (always used as one word) goes to Geneva, is seduced by a Polish Count, over a plate of pastry no less, and loses her virginity. A young Jordanian, who even Shahnaz did not seem to know too well, commits suicide. That's Geneva and, presumably "growing up". It tells you nothing of the dilemmas of youth facing its first emotional challenge. Maybe she did not face any dilemmas; it could have been a French count, a Bulgarian Earl or an Italian Duke, for all we know of her emotional reactions to the graphic loss of her virginity.

Kashmir is more entangled and on some rare occasions even credible. Except that Sibal's continuum of pre-partition activities and present day realities of the situation confuse the reader. So what if it is fiction? It surely is not fantasy. Shahnaz's freedom in consorting with the terrorists, militants, freedom fighters whatever, in the period she is writing about, pre-1947—is as unreal as her relationship with Aslam Sheik—the only person who seemed to have later defined her attitude towards people. The defining moment in the relationship takes place at the Martand Temple, where Shahnaz, who had supposedly gone to help in a meeting of volunteers fighting the Maharaja, takes herself away from it all, and sits within the temple, waiting for Aslam Sheikh to declare his love, when clearly he is busy organizing, not very effectively as it turns out, and who can blame him? A protest rally or protection from the Maharaja's goons, the workers!

"High mountains towered behind them, and their movements were dwarfed by the immense blue emptiness of sky above (sic). My love for Aslam Sheikh was complete and free-standing, a huge block of silence in my blood. (Love clearly affects people in different ways!) I saw him among the others, with his back to me, facing the workers, his hair thinning at the top, narrow bony shoulders, arms moving forcefully in wide shirt-sleeves as he talked. My heart was full of pain, he seemed so distant and separate. When would he come to me? I fled into a smaller chamber, a crypt, and sat cross-legged on the floor, waiting. A smell of bats came from dark, cold corners. Slowly the sun rose and began to beat at the bottom of a golden receptacle, the womb, Hiranyagarbha, being offered up as sacrifice." The significance is mind-numbing.

"Fiery red balls dropped from the sun through the air, and spread in my eyes, hands, ears. The heat explored my head(sic) each black hair followed to its glossy root.

'Why have you been hiding here? I've been looking for you. Aziz told me you he saw you coming in this direction.' His voice was behind me. I scrambled up from the stone floor.

'I could only have been here, the plateau is bare except for this temple. You were busy.'

'I wanted to get away with you somewhere. Somehow in Srinagar everything's mixed up. Listen, Shahnaz, I think we should get married.'

I stared at him.

"Anyone would have, what with the sun, the bats and the Hiranyagarbha."

It is this rather banal style that makes the rest of the book such painful reading. Even if one can forget the plot, such as it is, disbelief does not suspend itself so willingly. Because Aslam Sheikh had

proposed to her, Shahnaz, a "foreign-returned" "educated girl", agrees to blow up a bridge. How would she know how to do it in the first place? And in the process kills off a geologist, whose memory, through his widow, comes to haunt her during her later exploits.

Shahnaz's marriage to Ranbir and their subsequent posting to Athens, where, believe it or not, Ranbir has an illegitimate daughter, starts a kind of fading-out process of Shahnaz. She becomes more puppet-like than before, even when her husband's illegitimate daughter makes what can only be called a "pass" at her. But the thread is still there, in the story, I mean. It only tends to get lost sometimes in the myriad characters introduced and then discarded by the author, and in the pages of description of Greece that would have done the Greek Tourist Board proud. Frankly, I found it extremely tedious.

I shall skip over Shahnaz's obsession with, maybe even identification with the figure of the dancer from Mohenjo-Daro that she sees for the first time in the Museum. Merely because what appears to be a cataclysmic impact on Shahnaz of a well known icon, makes no sense. It does nothing to alter her behaviour or her perceptions. Not that we are told what they are, her perceptions, I mean. Perhaps it is an effort of the author to inject some amount of mystery into a dull, trite character, who knows?

Jabalpur would have been more of the same, the puppets, the myriad confusing and irrelevant characters cavorting against the newspaper-headline montage of events related to the gas tragedy in Bhopal and the controversy over the Narmada dam. However, here Shahnaz is up to her old habits, getting her pleasure from one Hiren Shah, an evil, corrupt bureaucrat, (whose wife leaves him to lead the protest against the dam a la Medha Patkar), who accepts bribes, engineers violence and doesn't care for his daughter, oddly named Kinshasa. Talk of stereotypes. But it is in this chapter, or phase, in those portions dealing with Monica, a war-widow turned environmental activist, that Sibal suddenly shows her potential as a writer. The creation of that small community in Jabalpur, characters such as Ghafoor, hold a promise for this young writer. Her style needs tightening, her characters need filling-out and interminable descriptions of natural beauty, when wrongly introduced, move the focus of the narrative, leaving behind a blur.

The killing of Ghafoor, the natural assumption of leadership by Monica reads like passages from another book, hopefully one that Sibal will concentrate on: Listen to this:

"A tall, striking figure lit by a torch, her booming words focussed attention immediately. Groups stopped leaving, joined the procession led by Shri Bhairavi and his three young ladies (in my view an editorial slip) who fanned out as winged lieutenants, nudging the scattered tribals back into a broad river of people which began to move from the school down the road towards the Empire Cinema. The students and others rallied at the margins. Committee members distributed themselves at strategic points. Mrs Monica walked, a strong figure of grace. . ." As Monica dies, (as related by a journalist besotted by her) Sibal comes out with what in my view is probably one of the most touching and at the same time, witty and sensitive paras in the book.

"A red patch was moving to the front of her blouse, staining the pallu of her sari. I couldn't see her wounds. 'Oh look up there', she said to me. A brilliant full moon floated in a few clouds, against a deep night sky. 'I'm glad we didn't go in after all. To look at a painted Italian ceiling just now wouldn't be appropriate.'

Returning to the rather dreary Shahnaz once more, this time in Dehra Dun, we get more of the same, the trivial details, Shahnaz's inability to withstand a proposition even from a person she admits she did not even like, and Ranbir's suicide as Shahnaz cavorts in a thundershower watched by her unfortunate daughter, we're back to the banality and posturing. The legacy Shahnaz spoke of at the beginning of the book is a saga any daughter would be happy to forget.

Arundhati Ghose is a retired Foreign Service officer.

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Rereading Manto

Antara Datta

LIFE AND WORKS OF SAADAT HASAN MANTO

Edited by Alok Bhalla

IIAS, Shimla, 1997, pp. 220, Rs. 240.00

The history of twentieth century literature of the subcontinent is unimaginable without the mention of Saadat Hasan Manto. With the nuclear arms race recharging the atmosphere of extant violence between India and Pakistan, it is imperative that we look back at history and learn a few lessons. Reading Manto in the current context therefore, becomes important not only for aesthetic pleasure but also for retrieving those lost notes which have sunk beneath our complacency and historical amnesia.

Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto edited by Alok Bhalla is a compilation of papers presented at a seminar on Manto in Shimla in May 1996. This collection is a serious attempt at providing a comprehensive assessment of Manto's life and literary career. Divided into seventeen chapters, the thematic and spatial canvas of this book is wide-ranging, giving expression to the disparate and heterogeneous response that Manto attracts in the contemporary literary context.

A substantial portion of the collection consists of discriminating biographical portraits of Manto, which try to locate him within the turbulent socio-political milieu, which he inhabited and inscribed. Bhisham Sahni's "Saadat Hasan Manto: A Note", Abdul Bismillah's "A reading of 'Pandit' Manto's Letter to Pandit Nehru", Shamin Hanfi's "Manto—The person and the Myth" and Indra Nath Chaudhari's "A Note on Some Myths About Manto", reveal diverse facets of Manto's chequered history, his political and literary predilections and the myths which surround his persona. What is unique in this effort is that for the first time an attempt has been made to put together contradictory and complementary evidence about Manto in a single collection. This enterprise not only brings to light hitherto unknown facts about Manto but also contextualises previous appraisals of this controversial writer. Manto is best remembered for his uncompromising 'truthfulness' in the depiction of the horrors of Partition. Manto's contribution in creating an alternative space where the discussion on Partition gathers newer and more disturbing ramifications remains unparalleled. The demographic and cultural dislocations initiated by the Partition had a direct impact on Manto. It was difficult for him to maintain a uniform sense of identity and this led him to ask questions like "Who am I? What is my status? . . . my soul is restless. That is why I am sometimes in a lunatic asylum and sometimes in a hospital. . ." (p. 184). This personal crisis expressed itself in some of the best fiction written by Manto. "Toba Tek Singh", "Khol Do", "1919 Ki Ek Baat", "Kali Shalwar" are accepted as some of the most acerbic and authentic fictional documentations of the blackest phase of the post-independence subcontinent. Alok Bhalla's "A Dance of Grotesque Masks", Shashi Joshi's "The World of Saadat Hasan Manto" and Keki K. Daruwala's "The Craft of Manto: Warts and All", are primarily concerned with the analyses of Manto's fictional strategies and ideology with special reference to the works cited earlier. These discussions are far from homogeneous and do justice to the complex questions that Manto's fiction repeatedly raises. Manto's conception of historical processes and their implications on the lives of those who participate in them directly or indirectly is a central idea in his fictional expositions. Manto was not interested in portraying the Partition as an impersonal political decision but implicated the masses who reinforced the cruelty which this historical event unleashed. Manto's prose spares no one. For him evil is as much individual as it is collective. As most of the critics in the collection point out, Manto's politics questioning the validity of the opinion which saw independence as an epiphanic moment in the history of the subcontinent. Manto's ideology provoked him to bring to focus those who have been marginalized and relegated to the periphery of conventional society. Harish Narang points out, "Manto's choice of pimps and prostitutes... as subjects is not accidental. It was an essential part of this ideology—an ideology which foregrounds the lives of the marginalized and subaltern with the clear objective of not only changing the course of the majority discourse but to subvert it" (p. 87).

A substantial portion of the collection consists of discriminating biographical portraits of Manto, which try to locate him within the turbulent socio-political milieu, which he inhabited and inscribed.

Manto's portrayal of the unprivileged, and the world-view behind his characterizations is approached from various perspectives in this collection. Sukrita Paul Kumar's essay concerns itself solely with the construction of women and feminity in Manto's works. She finds in Manto "an androgynous sensibility in unravelling the existential stirrings of women..." she adds, "Given a feminist reading, his stories show how literature can become a potent weapon in disturbing the established modes of existence. . . (pp. 103, 112). Keki Daruwalla questions the effectiveness of Manto's craft and with his characteristic touch of original critical insight argues that though Manto's "heart is in the right place and he writes against the male exploitation of the wife, the woman, the prostitute... But strong feeling does not necessarily for strong art" (p. 61). Where most critics, despite their differences, unquestionably accept the social and socialist motivation behind most of Manto's creativity, scholars like Daruwalla and Shashi Joshi emphasise his similarity with modern existentialist writers and insist that "his stories are anti-ideology, anti-heroic, anti-salvationist (and that he was) opposed to offering 'ideology as resolution of and salvation for individuals and societies" (p. 157). The book accommodates these contradictory assessments of Manto with remarkable balance and objectivity.

No discussion of Manto could be complete without an understanding of Manto's own perception of the role of art and the artist. The sense of anguish that most of his works exude is an expression of Manto's preoccupation with what he thought as fit subjects for the artistic enterprise. Manto had been accused throughout his literary career of assaulting the sensibility of his readers and crossing the bounds of decency. Manto in answer to these charges showed a tremendous sense of dedication to what he thought to be his function as an artist, and nothing could detract him from his beliefs. He said, "I believe nothing is obscene in itself—things are made obscene on purpose... We writers are no Prophets, whatever we understand true or false, we present to our readers. . . I am an artist. I do not like shabby wounds" (pp. 72, 78, 213). Gopi Chand Narang, Shamim Hanfi and Tarannum Riaz discuss Manto's role as a writer in considerable detail. Tejwant Singh Gill reads Manto in the context of some well-known Punjabi writers to show the correspondences and divergences between them. The book, through extensive quotes and extracts from Manto's autobiographical writings and statements, is able to construct a complex picture of Manto's ideas and preferences.

Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto has been published at a time when the subcontinent is engaged in reassessing its history and 'achievements'. This introspection has forced the literary world to re-read writers like Manto in the contemporary context not only because he was a unique and challenging writer but also because the issues raised by him in his fiction continue to plague us even today. The collection encompasses an amazing range of perspectives which allows the reader to assess Manto and his fictional world in all the complexities they deserve.

Antara Datta teaches in Delhi University.

Communication

Locationality of the Expatriate Indian Scholar

I wish to correct an inadvertent editorial slip that seems to have crept in my review of R.S. Khare's 'Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent' (*The Book Review*, Vol. XXII No. 8, August 1998). The published sentence is "I have personally known a scholar much more senior and distinguished than Professor Khare, an expatriate Indian social scientist, who would not let him speak in India on the Indian campuses on the logic of 'What right and authority do you have?' In my original typescript the sentence reads as follows:

"I have personally known a scholar much more senior and distinguished than Professor Khare, an expatriate social scientist, with tears in his eyes, expressing deep anguish at Indian colleagues who would not let him (this senior scholar) speak in India on the Indian campuses on the logic 'What right and authority do you have'?

The correction is important as it impinges crucially on the delicate issue of locationality of the expatriate Indian scholar.

Ravindra K. Jain

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Raquel Kennedy Bergen
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Sage Publications, 1998, pp.314, $58.00(cloth), $26.95(paper).

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Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 281, Rs. 425.00

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Dr. Anil Kumar
The author unravels the political linkages and sociological interactions between Western medical science and the British Empire, focussing on the period 1835-1911. He also provides a contemporary critique of the imperialist—nationalist debate on research in medicine as also outlines the course of action the British ought to have taken to ameliorate suffering in India. The book will interest, historians, political scientists and sociologists.
Sage Publications, 1998, pp. 246, Rs. 395.00

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Michael L. Huht(Editor)
This volume examines the many dimensions of prejudice. It presents a new and integrative conceptual mode of prejudice, the layered perspective of cultural intolerance, and uses this model to analyze the communication of prejudice in a variety of spheres such as racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism and classism. A series of personal narratives makes this volume come to life, each describing an author's experience with prejudice in their personal and/or professional life.
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■ LITERATURE

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Rawat Publications, 1998, pp. 216, Rs. 350.00

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'First comes the Night' is the English translation of the Tamil short story collection 'Mudhalil Iravu Varum 'by Sadhavan Sundaram, which won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1987. The stories are noted for their innovative style, refreshing originality of theme and the power of intellectual analyses. The stories deal with the complexities of middle-class Tamil life, proves the predicament of the youth confronting a crisis of identity and seeks to come to terms with the generation gap.
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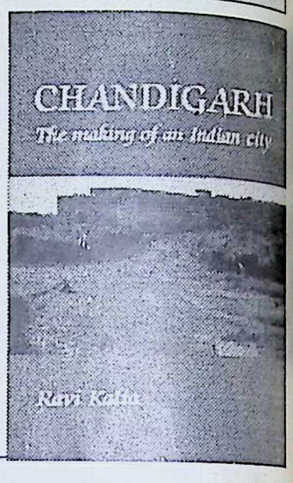

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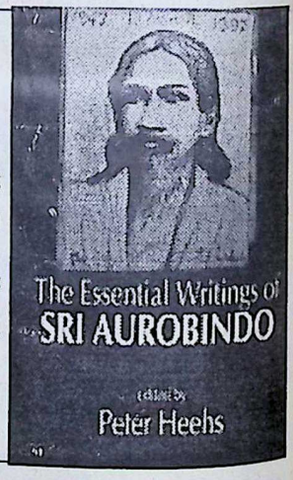

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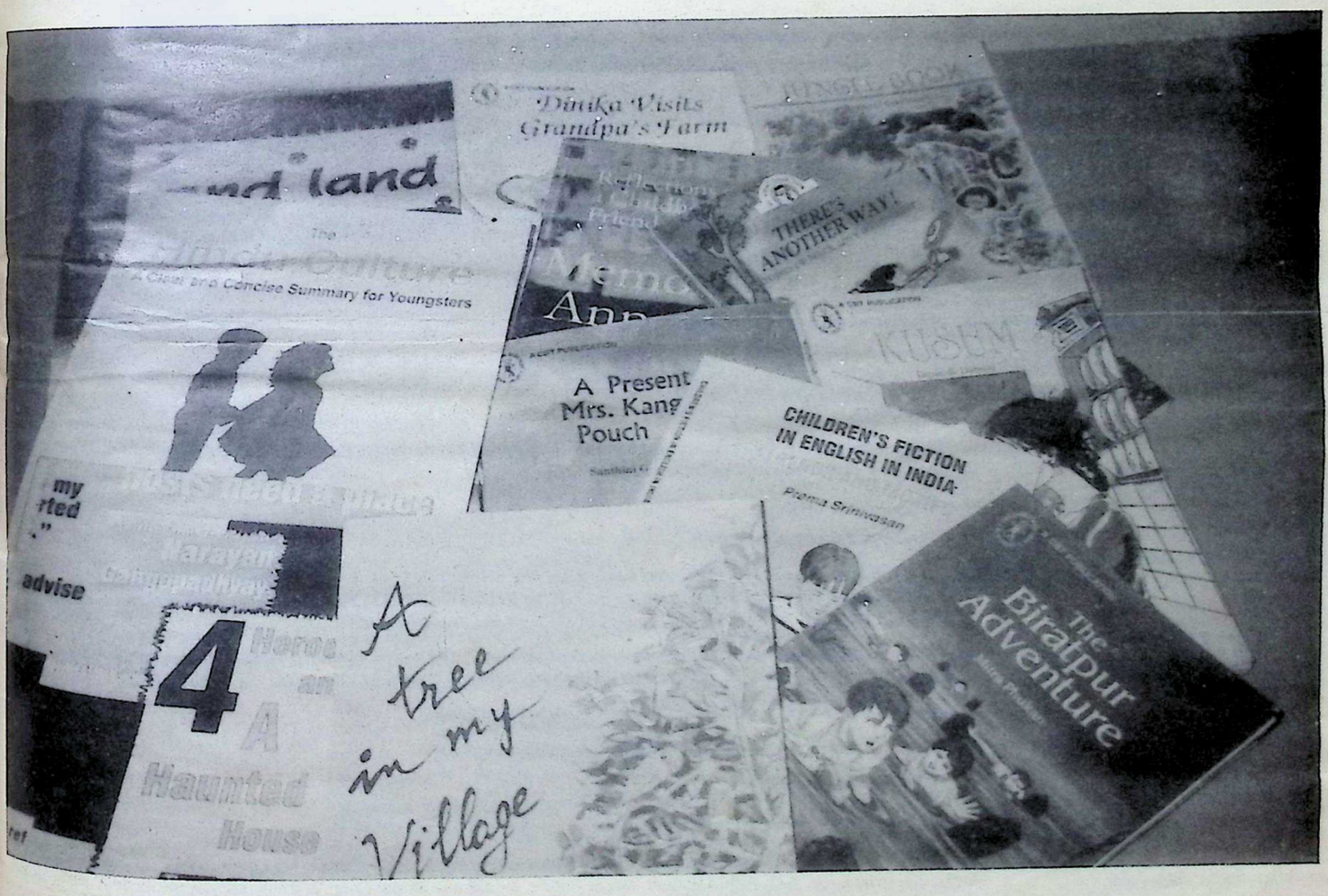

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Raja Rao: Mādhyama and Mantra

The 60th Anniversary of Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938–1998)

Braj B. Kachru

Introduction[1]

The year 1998 is the sixtieth anniversary (ṣaṣṭipūrti) of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*. One way to offer him my *śraddhāñjali* ('token of salutation') is to discuss briefly one of the liberating *mantras* from the book—its vision and its far-reaching significance. Rao presented this *mantra* in the formative years of creativity in Indian English. This, I believe, is the occasion to place that *mantra* in a broader historical context and to study its emancipating impact on creativity in English in South Asia and beyond. In 1937 [published in 1938], Rao told us regarding writing in English that "the telling has not been easy" since "one has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" (vii).[2] This dilemma is between *mādhyama*, the medium, and *mantra*, the message—the channel and what it conveys. The medium represents "an alien language" and yet, Rao says, English is "not really an alien language".

This explanation, and its elaboration, is articulated in the "Author's Foreword" (vii-viii) of less than 500 words—just 461, to be exact. It is these 461 words I would like to discuss and contextualize here. In retrospect, sixty years later, one can argue that this Foreword as a *mantra* envisions an emerging canon, and circles the possible boundaries of its canonicity—linguistic and contextual. The Foreword outlines an agenda and became Rao's own credo of creativity: It indeed proved to be a trail-blazer of what turned out to be a liberating tradition in world Englishes. It was, as Parthasarathy rightly says (1987: 157), "revolutionary in its declaration of independence from English literature."

A number of sentences from this Foreword have repeatedly been quoted, analyzed, and paraphrased, both in Rao's India and in other parts of the world, where creativity in English has gradually become an integral part of the national literatures. And, as time has passed, with various modifications and interpretations, the credo acquired almost the status of a manifesto in founding what, in the 80s, has been called "liberation linguistics".[3] Rao, of course, did not use the term "liberation"; he did not need to. Instead, he just carved a different path consistent with his native tradition—that of convergence, cohesion, and assimilation. What he did by this *mantra*, and later, was to put around the English language the Brahminical "sacred thread," thus initiating English into India's linguistic family. It is in this subtle and suggestive way that Rao performed the saṁskāra ("initiation rite") and brought the English language within the mainstream of India's linguistic and cultural tradition (*paramparā*).

In this sense, then, Rao's credo was both a reinvention of the language, and a reconstruction of how it could be defined. In his reconstruction, Rao recognized the implications of three basic features of the induction of English in India's pluralistic context: the bilingual's creativity, the formal and functional hybridity of the language, and the recontextualization of a colonial linguistic weapon within the age-old assimilative linguistic history of India.

The Caste of English

In 1937 Rao talked of an Indian identity of English—he was presenting a vision and expressing a *kāmanā*—an intense desire. This visionary insight was, however, elaborated further over twenty years later, in 1978. In a short paper appropriately titled "The caste of English," Rao attributes a *varṇa*, a caste, to the language. He actually blends his metaphysical and pragmatic visions concerning English and places the language on the same elevated pedestal of Truth as the one on which Sanskrit ("The Perfected Language") has traditionally been placed by the Brahmins, as *devavāṇī* ("divine or heavenly language"). And Rao adds a pragmatic aspect to the language by saying, "so long as the English language is universal, it will always remain Indian":

> Truth, said a great Indian sage, is not the monopoly of the Sanskrit language. Truth can use any language, and the more universal, the better it is. If metaphysics is India's primary contribution to world civilization, as we believe it is, then must she use the most universal language for her to be universal... And so long as the English language is universal, it will always remain Indian...

It is this type of *mantra* which Rao uses to respond to the ideological and linguistic war which Thomas B. Macaulay (1800–1891) had launched over a century earlier, aiming at the soul and mind of India.

Rao is also responding to India's linguistic chauvinism, particularly that of the post 1960's, when he says:

> It would then be correct to say as long as we are Indian—that is, not nationalists, but truly Indians of the Indian psyche—we shall have the English language with us and amongst us, and not as a guest or friend, but as one of our own, of our caste, our creed, our sect and of our tradition.

By incorporating the language within the caste, within the creed, and within the sect, the *saṁskāra* is complete—and for Rao the Indian identity of English is complete. The initiation, the *saṁskāra*, has "liberated" both the medium and the message that the medium conveys. And now truly "the Empire talks back," reciting its own *mantra* in multiple voices.

The *mantra* is not just incantation, intoning and chanting of a word or a phrase. It is more than that. It is a medium of thought, and

> it is not the conceptual, discoursive, differentiating form of thought (*vikalpa*) that accompanies empirical language. This is more intense, more effective thought, a thought that is also one-pointed since it is connected with a concentrated form of speech, endowed with special potency and efficacy (Padoux 1990: 373).

This explanation of *mantra* is consistent with what has been labeled the "Kashmirian theory of *mantras*".[4]

Anatomy of the Mantra

What Rao's *mantra* regarding English does is to contextualize English within five refreshingly new perspectives.

First, there is reference to language as medium and as a vehicle of a message. The medium, as mentioned above, is "not one's own." But the spirit that the medium conveys "is one's own."

The identity is with the functions and acculturation that the language has acquired in Rao's India—the form or substance appropriately Indianized to serve these ends.[5]

The second perspective concerns the daunting issues of reconciling local culture and "Thought-movement" in an "alien" language.

> . . . thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language.

And here Rao is encountering the Whorfian dilemma. But having said this, Rao pauses, and almost as an afterthought, he reconsiders his use of the distance-marking term "alien". In reconsidering the "alienness" of English, and how it becomes "Indian," Rao says:

> I used the word "alien," yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up. We are all *instinctively bilingual*, many of us writing in our own language and in English (Emphasis added).

The term "instinctively bilingual" has immense implications for our understanding of the multilinguals' language behaviour. This concept of "instinctive" bilingualism has yet to be understood in the societies where monolingualism continues to be treated as a *normal* linguistic phenomenon and multilingualism is viewed as linguistic aberration. And this latter view continues to be held in many linguistic and educational circles in the West.

I don't think that the concept of "instinctive bilingualism," or at least some inherent human capacity for multilingualism, has even now entered the theoretical conceptualization in explaining bilinguals' strategies. (see, e.g., Kachru 1996a and b, and 1997). Consider the relatively recently articulated views of social scientist Shills and linguist Crystal. Shills (1988: 560) claims that:

> The national language of literary creation is almost always the *language of the author's original nationality*, there are, of course, exceptions, such as Conrad, and, at a lower level Nabokov and Koestler, Apollonaire and Julien Green. But for writing about public or political matters, a foreign language is often used effectively [emphasis added].

When asked to explain the difference between people who have native speaker awareness of a language and those who do not, Crystal's response is rather mystifying. He says (cited in Paikeday 1985: 66–67) that

> it is quite unclear what to make of cases like Nabokov and the others. George Steiner (*Extraterritorial pa-*

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pers) talks about as having no native language. But these are marginal cases.

And, elaborating on who is a "native speaker" (of English), Crystal continues (68):

> I know several foreigners whose command of English I could not fault, but they themselves deny they are native speakers. When pressed on this point, they draw attention to... their lack of childhood associations, their limited passive knowledge of varieties, the fact that there are some topics which they are more 'comfortable' discussing in their first language. "I couldn't make love in English," said one man to me.

These views only partially reflect the contexts of creativity and proficiency across speech communities, and are particularly inadequate when considering language use in the multilingual societies around the world.[6]

Rao's third perspective relates to hybridity in terms of the convergence of visions when the English language is used in pluralistic contexts:

> We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us.

What is called the Rushdiesque language, and defined as "a hybrid form of post-colonial and post-modern narrative discourses" by Langeland (1996: 16) has its well-conceptualized beginning in Rao. Langeland considers this aspect of Rushdie's technique (1996: 16)

> as a radical linguistic operation implanting new cultural impulses into hitherto more narrowly ethnocentric language.

This was the point that Rao was addressing a decade before Salman Rushdie was born and over a generation before Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) was published.

Fourth, Rao recognized that there is a linguistic consequence of this convergence that results in formal distinctiveness of the *Indian* variety of English. He compared the situation with Irish and American English, both of which had to undergo a long struggle for what may be called their "linguistic liberation":

> Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American.

Fifth, hybridity results in stylistic transcreation, and here again, Rao refers to American and Irish varieties of English:

> After language the next problem is that of style. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of others.

Thus, Rao sees that the "tempo of Indian life" must be "infused" in our literary creativity. That "tempo" is well represented, as Rao reminds us, in our literary *paramparā*, in our epics, and in the puranas—in "high" culture and the "vernacular" culture:

> And our paths are interminable. The *Mahabharata* has 214,778 verses and the *Ramayana* 48,000. The *Puranas* are endless and innumerable.

And what are our conventions of discourse? What is our "culture of grammar"?

> We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous "ats" and "ons" to bother us—we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move to another thought. This was and is the ordinary style of storytelling.

In these five points Rao provides a context and broad features for the *Indianization* of the English language. In other words, he outlines the grammar of discourse, and emphasizes the culture that the language was gradually acquiring in India.

These five perspectives, then, encapsulate the foundations of what one sees now as emerging canons of English in its second diaspora—the Asian and African diaspora. This *mantra* authenticates the crossover of English in its altered sociocultural contexts.

The five perspectives may be summarized as:

1. The relationship between the medium (*mādhyama*) and the message (*mantra*)
2. Reconceptualization of the contextual appropriateness of English as a medium of creativity
3. The relevance of hybridity and creative vision and innovation
4. The relevance of language variety, linguistic appropriateness, and identity
5. Stylistic transcreation, cultural discourse, and their relationship with local *paramparā*

The text of Kanthapura that follows the Foreword actually gives life to Rao's vision of creativity, and he tells us that "I have tried to follow it myself in this story" (viii): He takes up his own challenge to demonstrate that the "thought-movement" is not "maltreated in an alien language". And in his use of English, he makes a distinction between two linguistic functions—*intellectual* and *emotional*:

> It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English.

In Rao's novel—his *sthala-purana*—a new linguistic tradition, a new dimension of creativity in world Englishes began to develop in the 1940s. This experimentation in creativity in English was not restricted to India. We witness various versions of such gradual—and sometimes subdued—experimentation in West Africa, in East Africa, and in Southeast Asia and the Philippines. The new paradigm for the use of the colonial language was unfolding itself, primarily with local initiatives. The earlier conceptual frameworks were being altered and set aside, and fresh initiatives were being outlined.

The credo of 1938 indeed became the cornerstone for what followed in the years to come. In different ways, and with different emphases, we hear these new voices in, for example, Nigeria's Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta, and Wole Soyinka; in Kenya's wa Thiong'o Ngugī; in Somali's Nuruddin Farah; and in Rao's own contemporaries in the Indian subcontinent, particularly in the stylistic and thematic experimentation of post-1947 writers such as Upamanyu Chatterji, Amitav Ghosh, Mukul Kesavan, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, I. Allan Sealy, Vikram Seth, and Shashi Tharoor.

In 1982, Rushdie tells us that, "we can't simply use the language [English] in the way the British did: it needs remaking for our own purposes."[7] The next generation had taken Rao's *mantra* and now the *paramparā* continues.

When Rao emphasizes the term *Indian* with English, for him English is a part of the region's multilingual's linguistic repertoire. And his modifier *Indian* with English is not to be understood in the sense in which it was being used in Rao's time by, for example, Goffin (1934), Kindersley (1938), and earlier by Whitworth (1907). These scholars, as I have discussed earlier (e.g., Kachru 1993, 1991), viewed Indian English primarily within the "language deficiency" paradigms, and Whitworth (1907: 6) considered Indian innovations as "linguistic flights, which jar upon the ear of the native Englishman." The use of the term Indian English is also not identical to what poet Nissim Ezekiel has labeled his 'Indian English poems."

Rao's creativity goes back six decades; these have been years of innovation and stylistic experimentation for him. *Kanthapura* provides the first conceptualization of Rao's view of *Indian* English, and this conceptualization continues to evolve in other distinct ways in his later writing. Parthasarathy (1987: 160) insightfully explains such experimentation as "ritually de-Anglicized English." The use of *ritually* with *de-Anglicization* is significant here.

> In *Kanthapura* English is thick with the agglutinants of Kannada; in *The Serpent and the Rope* the Indo-European kinship between English and Sanskrit is creatively exploited; and in *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) English is made to approximate the rhythm of Sanskrit chants. At the apex of this linguistic pyramid is... *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, wherein Rao has perfected his experiments with the English language spanning more than fifty years.

What we see, then, is that each of Rao's novels in its distinct way authenticates and expands one or more aspects of Rao's 1938 credo. And each stylistic experiment appropriates, as it were, the English language on Indian terms. The Indian canon of English gains yet more energy, vitality and identity. In other words, it legitimizes itself in India's sociocultural context. The works that followed *Kanthapura* are essentially Indian in their contextualization, their multilinguality, their linguistic and cultural hybridity, and to use Thumboo's term, in linguistic and cultural "crossover."

Let me give just one example of the code-mixed texture of Rao's discourse here. Linguistic hybridity is skillfully foregrounded in his *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988). The novel brings together eight languages: three western (English, French, and Greek), and five Indian (Sanskrit, Tamil, Hindi, Hindustani, and Urdu). Witness the following:

> 'Ca va?' answers Jayalakshmi, adjusting her necklace. 'Est-ce qu'on va le trouver aujourd'hui', he continues, the last word said with such heaviness.
> 'Si le Seigneur le veut."
> 'Mais quel seigneur?'
> 'Lui,' she said with a mischievous

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smile, as if thinking of someone far away, very far away.
'Qui donc?'
'Son Altesse le lion.' Of course she was speaking a lie.
'Le tigre?'
'Non,' she said, and turned to her father, asking if the mail had come. (195)

And Rao with equal ease switches to Hindi:

"Maji kahan gaye hain? Achha. Suno. Vo kab arahi hai?—Agaye? Kapada badalke arahi hai? Achha. Padu. Bye-bye" (175)

In designing the text, in incorporating language into the stream of narrative, 'instinctive bilinguality' is taken for granted. There is no concession made for monolingualism. And no textual clues are available for comprehension of Sanskrit, French, or Hindi. The burden of linguistic and cultural intelligibility and interpretation is on the reader. Consider, for example, sentences such as:

"Our alaya, the true home, is forever the Himalaya" (46);
"It is all prarabdha, it's written on our foreheads" (49);
"For either you touch suffering, and so suffer, or reach to the other side, and be it.
One is kashta and the other duhkha" (4);
"A brahmin should not touch jhoota, especially, my jhoota" (130);
"And so you and your beads, and the sorrow. Duhkha me duhkha milaja" (108).

The "mixing" and "switching" plays distinctive stylistic and identity roles in his writing and it is much more marked in *The Chessmaster and His Moves* than in the earlier *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960). In the former, the glossary includes 336 words, as opposed to just 27 in the latter.

One linguistic device that contributes to what had been termed Rao's metaphysical style is his aphoristic use of language. One is tempted to say that in such use the medium is English, but the underlying thought-process is almost Vedantic. Rao is adept in the process of transcreation from Sanskrit. Note the following examples,

"To be is to is-to-be nowhere" (48).
"To be is to know, but to know is rarely to be" (63
"Going in non-going" (55)
"Not to be is truly to be" (95)
"Death's death is what death seeks" (104)
"To belong you must be lost" (143)
"The essence essences essence" (162)

If *Kanthapura* was his first specimen of the implementation of his credo, the conceptualization of *Indian* English, the full range of such experimentation is found in his later works.

In his lexicalization from India's languages, Rao follows a somewhat different path than his contemporaries Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh, and Ahmad Ali. It is not just lexical foregrounding, but it is part of discoursal cohesion—an integral part of the style. The incorporation of Sanskrit words is one device that Rao uses for the metaphysical and Vedantic contextualization of the narrative. This type of Sanskritization of discourse results in the linguistic dilemma of establishing translation equivalence between Sanskrit and English. What Rao does is to include in the stream of narrative *semantic sets* of the following types:

Adi Sesha, "The Primal Serpent"; *advaita*, "nondual"; *ahamkara*, "I-ness"; *ahanta*, "emphasis on personal I"; *agnana*, "ignorance"; *anaman*, "nameless"; *bhavati*, "becoming"; *dhih*, "intellect"; *ka*, "light"; *prana*, "life-breath"; *samsara*, "cyclic becoming or existence"; *satvic*, "pure"; *tapas*, austerity"; and *yoga chakra*, "the subtle nervous system."

Structure as the Puranic Form

In his structural conceptualization of the text, Rao again looks back to the tradition, to the *parampara* of *sthala purana*. In other words, to recreate English within that tradition of "legendary history." Whether Rao has been successful in doing so can be judged by critics who are competent to do so. Rao, however, does recognize that is is India's Puranas and epics that provide ideas for structural frameworks to him: the conventions of *Kadambari* (eighth century) by Bana, and *Uttararamacharita* (eighth century) by Bhavabhuti. One is, therefore, not surprised that Rao regrets his inability to write in Sanskrit. And he often talks about it with nostalgia.

In 1997, in *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947–1997*, Salman Rushdie, commenting on "the generation of independence, 'midnight's parents'" of Indian English rightly calls them "the true architects" of new tradition (e.g., Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao). Rushdie considers Rao ". . . A scholarly Sanskritist, [who] wrote determinedly of the need to make an Indian English for himself, but even his much-praised portrait of village life, *Kanthapura*, seems dated, its approach at once grandiloquent and archaic" (1997a: xvii). These are, of course, broad and sweeping generalizations. But then, a few pages earlier (p. xi), Rushdie is honest when he says that some readers (of the anthology) may feel that "we are simply betraying our own cultural and linguistic prejudices, or defending our turf, or—even worse—gracelessly blowing our own trumpet" (xi).

In the same volume, Rushdie, however, does echo Rao's observation of 1938 that "Indian English, sometimes unattractively called 'Hinglish', is not 'English' English, to be sure, any more than Irish or American or Caribbean English is." The achievement of the writers is ". . . to have found literary voices as distinctly Indian, and also as suitable for any and all of the purposes of art, as those other Englishes forged in Ireland, Africa, the West Indies, and the United States" (1997a: xiii).

In Rao's "Author's Foreword" to *Kanthapura* he says that "our paths are interminable." And he elaborates:

> We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous"ats" and "ons" to bother us—we tell an interminable tale.

Rao, as indicated above, has no hesitation in violating the traditional conventions of English punctuation, capitalization, and sentence construction. In the traditional orthographies of Indian languages there are just *virām* and *ardhavirām*, one represented by one vertical line and the other by two such lines. There are, therefore, no rules of Fowler's prescriptivism for Rao, though Fowler had acquired the status of a linguistic Bible in Colonial Asia and Africa.

In *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, for example, Rao is indifferent to the conventions of English punctuation, capitalization, and sentence and discourse organization. There are sentences of one page (264–65) and even one-and-a-half pages in length (501–2). There is a conscious attempt to extend the Indianness of the language by de-emphasizing its "alien" canonical conventions—the Judao-Christian conventions, the range of linguistic and contextual associations that identifies English with western canons. What Rao does is to put India's English on the same linguistic pedestal as Sanskrit, which has been in Rao's native India for the past thousands of years. And Rao does it on his own terms. That is what he had envisioned in 1938 when he said that

> Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.

What Rao said in 1938 in those four hundred and sixty-one words was both visionary and prophetic. It was the first conceptualization of canonicity of India's English. It was visionary in more than one sense. In his approach to imperial English he was creative and assimilative. He questions the pragmatics of the exocentric model; argues for the legitimacy of nativization of English, and justifies the acculturation of Imperial English to give it an Indian identity. In other words, he locates the language in India's linguistic and cultural space.

Rao's Creed in a Historical Context

In the historical context of world Englishes, the crosscultural spread and emerging new identities and canons of English, Rao's credo was indeed, to repeat Parthasarathy, "revolutionary." In the 1930s, and until much later, Imperial English continued to have a firm grip—attitudinal and symbolic—on all world varieties of English. One has to make a distinction here between attitudes toward the Received variety of English and actual performance in the variety. In literature it has been shown that even in the USA, UK and other Inner Circle countries adherence to the Received model has been an exception and not a rule. And in recent years "the loose canons" are aggressively seeking their legitimate linguistic rights in that mythical circle. But that is a different story.

One might ask: What were the views on linguistic liberation" and experimentation in Rao's India and beyond in the 1930s? What was the context of English in the Outer Circle (Anglophone Asia and Africa)? Rao made these observations just nineteen years after Henry Louis Mencken (1980-1956) published his monumental, *The American Language* (1919). In his first edition of the book, Mencken claimed that.

> Americans spoke a separate language of their own making that they could take pride in, not an imperfect imitation of the language of England (McArthur 1992:651: see also Kahane 1992).

The stirring for an identity had just begun in the USA, but Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were still not seeking an autonomous linguistic identity in any serious sense. The story of English in the Outer Circle was essentially one of English as the tool of the Empire: The Empire had yet to become articulate in English. It is true that bilingualism in English had gradually gained momentum, but there was still no recognition of the types of crossover and markers of new linguistic and cultural identities for the language.

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A parallel example of the linguistic—and cultural—appropriation of English by the natives of the Outer Circle would be that of Africa. However, in the 1930s, the Africanization of English and its exponents of identity had yet to be established. We see the first articulation of that in a most skillful way in, for example, Amos Tutuola in the 1950s and Chinua Achebe in the 1960s. That is almost three decades after Rao's Foreword. The insightful argument of Achebe about "how I approach the use of English" reveals the most skillful argument of a literary craftsman. In making a case for the Africanization of English, Achebe contrasts the Africanized version with "another way"—the non-Africanized way. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1966), the chief priest, explaining to one of his sons the importance of sending him to church , says to him in what may be called the Africanized version:

> I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something then you will bring back my share. The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying "had we known" tomorrow.

Then Achebe contrasts this with another version—a non-Africanized version—and asks, "Supposing I had put it another way. Like this for instance":

> I am sending you as my representative among these people—just to be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight.

In support of the first version—the African version—Achebe provides a pragmatically and contextually valid argument. In his view:

> the material is the same. But the form of the one is in character, the other is not. It is largely a matter of instinct but judgment comes into it too.

The two crucial words here are "instinct" and "judgement": the first relates to the African "thought-pattern" as transcreated into English and the second to pragmatism with reference to the African context. In Achebe's decision, we see that African "thought-movement" has not been "maltreated in an alien language." Indeed, Rao would agree with Achebe.

What we see is that each African and Asian English-using country adopts a strategy relevant to its own context, contexts of culture and patterns of interaction. The processes of Englishization have been almost identical, but the specific linguistic innovations have varied in each region—West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, South and East Asia. The search has been toward the same end—to seek culture-specific cultural identity through the medium of English.

The most passionate articulation of this position is in Wole Soyinka, who emphasizes that English plays "unaccustomed roles" in Africa and has thus become a "new medium of communication." This medium functions in "a new organic series of mores, social goals relationships, universal awareness—all of which go into the creation of new culture".

Soyinka expresses the Africanization of English very differently from Rao when he says that:

> Black people twisted the linguistic blade in the hands of the traditional cultural castrator and carved new concepts into the flesh of white supremacy.

In this metaphor there is both passion and anger—the medium is an active weapon. And what used to be "the enslaving medium," as Soyinka sees it, has been converted into "an insurgent weapon." In other words the acculturation and Africanization of English has been complete. The process which Soyinka explains in a way answers Gabriel Okara's (1963:15-16) question:

> Why shouldn't there be a Nigerian or West African English which we can use to express our own ideas, thinking and philosophy in our own way?

The identity issue is not restricted to Asia or Africa—far from that. We see it in the USA too. The result is what Gates. Jr(1992) calls "the culture wars" for the identity of "the loose canons". [8]

The "Loose Canons" and other Canons

What are the responses to the canons of creativity in English in what was the Empire? What is the reaction to what Rao's 1937[1938] credo has unleashed? The reactions have been of two types. The first reaction is that the multilingual's creativity in Asia and Africa has given the English language a unique vitality, innovation, and cultural expansion. It has given it a pragmatic legitimacy. The result is what may be called a "multicanons" of English—actually, Englishes. It has indeed rejuvenated the medium and rescued it from exhaustion. The other reaction is almost the opposite of that, as demonstrated in, for example, the attitudes and concerns of Bailey and Quirk. I have discussed it in detailed elsewhere.[9]

The on-going debate about diluting the canon and keeping "loose canons" out on the periphery is only one side of the current debate on English. Rushdie(1991:61) encountered this attitude when a specialist in *English* literature,". . . a friendly and perceptive man" suggested to him that:

> [as] a Commonwealth writer. . . you probably find, don't you, that there's a kind of liberty, certain advantages, in occupying, as you do, a position on the periphery?

This *periphery* is one way that *defines* a Commonwealth writer in English. At a seminar in Cambridge, a lady from the British Council reassured Rushdie that "it's all right, for the purposes of our seminar, English studies are taken to include Commonwealth literature." (1991:61) And Rushdie continues that:

> [at] all other times, one was forced to conclude, these two would be kept strictly apart, like squabbling children, or sexually incompatible pandas, or perhaps, like unstable, fissible materials whose union might cause explosions(1991:61).

Rao's *mantra* of the Indian reincarnation of English is one perspective. The debate about English in India, initiated with Macaulay's Minute of 1835, has continued unabated. There are more than two sides to it. Consider, for example, views expressed in reviews. These views present two distinct visions and two distinct responses to Rao's *mantra* . First, the esctasy of an Indian journalist, N.S. Jagannathan (1996):

> And the most important means that both the rulers and the ruled used for transforming the Indian mind and imagination was ironically, the English language. It was through it we had access to western (read English) ideas and imagination. And Sanskrit literacy among even educated Indians being what it is, it was through English that the majority of them discovered their own intellectual history including that part of it inscribed in Indian languages unknown to them. Even anti-British nationalism was nurtured by English, a fact often forgotten by Macaulay-baiters assailing the hegemonic hold that the West has even today on our thinking.

Second, the agony of an Indian educator, R.C. Gupta(1996):

> The ethical questions: 'How and by what logic should we continue to impose English language on our young learners? and 'how much damage are we doing to the Indian languages and to the self-esteem of their speakers by our continued insistence on the teaching of English as an integral, nay essential, part of our curriculum?—are not asked even by one contributor.

Rao's Mantra and Caliban's Canon

There is no paucity of theoretical, ideological, and pragmatic perspectives and analyses on the consequences of the introduction of English in Colonial Asia and Africa. And each label, each epithet, and each characterization represents an underlying attitude and a vision of a nation, nationhood, and national linguistic identity. These identities reflect in the use of attitude-marking terms for English such as *Auntie tongue, Trojan horse,* the *Other tongue, Step daughter,* and so on.

The most suggestive and loaded metaphor indeed is Caliban's tongue. It symbolizes how Caliban acquired a voice and used it as a linguistic weapon. It also symbolizes the Imperial attitude toward Caliban and what he represents. The language was used for the spiritual, moral, and educational elevation of Caliban—Asia and Africa were the White Man's burden.

But not for Rao. He does not use any such metaphors. There is no Caliban here, nor is Rao using English from the periphery. He brings English, and its functions, to the center of his creativity, to the center of *Indianness*. In his hands the crossover of the language is on Rao's terms.

In *Kanthapura's* foreword, Rao makes a calm assertion of the instrumental use of the English language without the anger and agony of Nigeria's Wole Soyinka or the accusation of racism against the English language of Kenya's wa Thiong'o Ngũgĩ. There is no conscious linguistic overlay of, for example, Mulk Raj Anand (1998), nor is there any "radical linguistic operation" of Salman Rushdie(cited in Langeland 1996:16):

> The (English)language. . . needs to be decolonized, to be made in other images, of those of us who use it from positions outside. Anglo-Saxon

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culture are to be more than artistic Uncle Toms. And it is this endeavour that gives the new literatures of Africa, the Caribbean and India much of their present vitality and excitement.

When asked, "Why does Rao use English?"[10] his response is consistent with the historical context of the period and within the assimilative linguistic tradition of India's past. He says:

> Historically, this is how I am placed. I'm not interested in being a European but in being me.. *But the whole of the Indian tradition, as I see it, is in my work.* There is an honesty in choosing English, an honesty in terms of history (Emphasis added).

Rao prefers the medium of English for pragmatic reasons too:

> In English, it seems as if one can do what one wants with the language. There are fewer rules, it's a newer language, and therefore has more freedom for invention (145).

And he contrasts English with French:

> I lived in France for a long time and know French almost as well as I do English, but this freedom is not available in French at all. French is so strict a language that there is hardly any freedom there (145).

We see the same view shared by Rao's younger contemporary, Anita Desai. Her "material" is "Indian" and she "had to bend it and adapt it somehow to the English language." Desai continues:

> The reason I'm so fascinated by the English language is that it's really possible to do this with English; it is flexible, it is so elastic. It does stretch, it does adapt, and it does take on all those Indian concepts and traditions and ways (171).

The canon formation had begun with Rao and it continues in various ways in the post-colonial Indian writing in English.

Conclusion

The vision Rao presented in 1938 for India's English "as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American" has actually come true, especially during the Post-Imperial period. It is so meaningful that in 1988 Rao revisited the question which he had raised—almost as an aside—sixty years ago. In *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, he brings in another facet, that of the contemporary English of his native India:

> Today of course what one speaks in India called English is a vernacular, and will someday grow like Urdu, taking its own rhythm and structure (189).

And then Rao Provides an Indian "meaning" to his contextualization, adding that:

> We in India welcome everything outlandish and offer it to the gods, who taste it, masticate it and give it back to us as *prasādam* ["offerings to the gods returned to man sanctified"]. When our English will have come to that maturity it might still achieve its own nationhood. Till then it will be like Anglo-Norman, neither French nor English, an historical incident in the growth of culture. After all, and we forget so easily, sister, India is hallowed with wisdom, antiquity, and history (189).

Once English acquired the ritualistic sanctity of *prasādam*, the earlier dichotomy that Rao suggested in 1938 between the *emotional* and *intellectual* make up ceases. Indian English becomes an integral part of *being*—being an Indian.

We have seen several visions concerning canons of world Englishes—the South Asian, the East Asian, the West and East African, and the African-American. Rao's vision of 1938 is far from Caliban's vision, or Caliban's anger or his revenge. And in Rao's hands language is not a weapon. There is no remorse, there is no revenge.

> You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language![11]

For Rao, English is linguistic *prasādam* and he enjoys it, he celebrates it. It is consistent with his native *paramparā*. In a recent evocative book entitled *Empire of the Soul: Some Journeys in India*, Paul Roberts says (1996: 271) that after

> Independence, however, Indian English said farewell to British English and began a life of its own. The British had shipped back a rich hand of linguistic booty over the years, too; many commonly used words... were the offspring of what Khushwant Singh termed promiscuous couplings with Indian languages. Home alone, Indian English became even more flirtatious among so many exotic tongues, rapidly evolving into a form as distinct at times, say the Irish English of James Joyce, or the richly varied American English of Damon Runyon, or Thomas Pynchon, or Alice Walker.

Roberts has missed the mark, in a way Indian English said farewell to British English in 1938 when Rao wrote his credo for creativity.

And as the years have passed, we see that Rao's *mantra* established a subtle connection between the English language and India's linguistic and cultural *paramparā* and its assimilative literary culture. It took English over half a century to become an exponent of India's literary culture. In this way, Rao authenticates what he said later—much later—in an interview,

> the important thing is not what language one writes in, for language is really an accidental thing. What matters is the authenticity of experience, and this can generally be achieved in any language.[12]

What Rao's *mantra* did was to create what has been called "unselfconsciousness" about English, about creativity in this language, about *Indianness*. The new generation of Indian English writers such as Vikram Seth are celebrating it. He says:[13]

> Many Indians have become quite unselfconscious about the use of English. It doesn't have colonial associations for them. They use it as freely as their own language.

The various modifications and elaborations of Rao's *mantra* thus provide us with early insights regarding "canon expansion" in world Englishes. These insights have to be contextualized within the literary and linguistic theoretical conceptualizations of the time—from the 1930s to the 1990s. What happens beyond the millennium is not easy to guess—the crystal ball is still very misty.

In literary terms, the influence of the Romantics was dominant in the 1930's. The concept of transcultural and multilingual creativity, and resultant canons, was yet to be established in English. Forester (1970) succinctly explains the context:

> . . . we have all been brought up to believe that each language has its mystery and its soul, and that these are very sacred things, in whose name indeed much blood has been shed in our own lifetime and is still being shed. . . [I]f we put sentiment aside, there are very many people and very many situations for which different languages are simply tools appropriate to certain definite purposes, analogous to the different stylistic levels within any one language.

This attitude resulted in what Lefevre (1990: 24) has called the attitude of "monolingualization" of literary history. He says it is:

> another pernicious outgrowth of the "monolingualism" of literary history by Romantic historiographers intent on creating "national" literatures preferably as uncontaminated as possible by foreign influences.

In linguistic conceptualizations, as Haugen (1950: 272) reminds us, the attitude toward bilingual's creativity conveyed psychological and linguistic marginalization. What we see, as Haugen says, is that "... both popularly and scientifically, bilingualism was in disrepute." Haugen makes a poignant observation that "just as the bilingual himself often was a marginal personality, so the study of his behaviour was a marginal scientific pursuit."

It is within the context of such a literary and linguistic theoretical vacuum that Rao's *mantra* has to be contextualized. In canon-formation in world Englishes, in constructs for such creativity, and in understanding the bi- or multilinguals' linguistic behaviour, Rao's *mantra* insightfully reminds us that language is merely the *mādhyama*.

In multilingual's creativity, as Rao rightly observes, what language one writes in "is an accidental thing." The important things is the authenticity of experience." Rao believes that one can express one's "experience" through the *mādhyama* of English. He, Rao adds, "found English to be the nearest equivalent to ancient Sanskrit as it has almost the same range of varied expression, suppleness, and adaptability to different modes and effects and similar richness and complexity."[14] Rao found French "... far more disciplined and precise. It allowed less room for experimentation which he had to do to adapt a western language to his eastern sensibility."[15]

It is in this way—a pragmatic way—that Rao authenticates the formal and functional *Indianness* in Indian English. It is such authentication that contributed toward developing "strategic constructs" for the Indian canon of English. And it is through such constructs, to use Kremode's concept,[16] that a *paramparā* is established, and that is what Rao did by using the subtle device of the "sacred thread" that Indianized the English language. It laid the foundation for the later genera-

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tion—for example, the Rushdie generation and "Rushdie's children."[17]

Notes

[1]An earlier version of this paper was presented at a symposium on "Word as Mantra: The Art of Raja Rao," at the University of Texas, Austin, Texas, USA, on March 24, 1997.

[2]I have used the New Directions paperback edition of *Kanthapura* published in 1967. The book was first published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, in 1938. Rao's "Author's Foreword" is dated 1937.

[3]For a detailed discussion see, e.g. Kachru, 1991, and 1996b.

[4]See, e.g., Padoux (1990: 372). For further analysis of literature on this topic see also Alper, ed. 1989; and Gonda 1963; and Padoux 1988.

[5]For references on English as a medium of plural canons and other related issues see Kachru 1997.

[6]See Kachru 1995b.

[7]For other perspectives see also Dissanayake (1985), Kachru (1986, and 1991) and Thumboo (1992).

[8] See Gates Jr. 1992.

[9]See Kachru 1991 and 1996a.

[10]See Jussawalla and Dasenbrock (1992: 144).

[11]William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. Caliban, Act 1, sc. 2.

[12]See Jussawalla and Dasenbrock (1992: 147).

[13]Interview published in *India Currents*. June 1993, 7(3): 20.

[14]Cited in Srivastava 1980: 106.

[15]Cited in Srivastava 1980: 105–106.

[16]Cited in Altieri 1990: 22.

[17]See Amitav Kumar's review of *The God of Small Things* (Arundhati Roy) and *The Calcutta Chromosome* (Amitav Ghosh) in *The Nation* (New York) September 29, 1998; Vol. 265, Number 9: 36–38) with the caption "Rushdie's children".

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Dilemmas and Challenges of Governance

A.K. Damodaran

SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: VOL. 19, SECOND SERIES

General Editor: S. Gopal

Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1998, pp. 786, Rs. 500.00

Successive volumes in the second, post-Independence series of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* are becoming more and more interesting as the months and the years pass. These are basically different from the *Collected Works* of Gandhiji for example, which contain a whole range of writings from newspaper editorials to friendly informal letters to every stranger who wrote to him. In Nehru's case in the earlier pre-Independence series, there were some letters of this type but now the large majority consists of confidential cables, notes of colleagues in the Cabinet and officers in the Ministry of External Affairs and speeches made in both Houses of Parliament and to the ordinary people of India in maidans all over the country. Intimate personal letters form only a very small portion of the book. But they make all the difference. The old carefree years of irresponsibility are echoed in, for instance, the letters to Jaiprakash Narain and, of course, Krishna Menon. Then there are the letters to the Chief Ministers, as many as six of them, during the brief period of three months between 25th July and 17th October, 1952, covered in this volume. They have been published earlier a few years ago under the editorship of G. Parthasarathi. When placed in the context of the discussions of current domestic and foreign policies, these letters are extremely useful. The total picture which emerges from each volume is a very clear detailed impression of the working of the Government of India at the decision making level, and also its dilemmas and challenges. The careless reader might, very often, miss the wood for the trees but the editing is so comprehensive and the footnotes so useful to situate the letters and notes in the proper perspective that it gives an almost physically immediate impression of history in the making. No other country has attempted a task as ambitious as this.

During these three months in 1952 Kashmir looms prominently. The State Constituent Assembly is in session and Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah have the beginnings of divergence of views on important matters. There is also the question of the removal of Maharaja Hari Singh and the working out of a formula for replacing him by his son, Yuvraj Karan Singh. There are some very interesting letters to the young prince faced with difficult choices. Curiously enough the dialogue with the King of Nepal, Tribhuvan Singh, about the problems created by his son, reflect the same ability on the part of Nehru to appreciate personal dilemmas. Nehru's difficulties with Kashmir are familiar enough. The reference to the U.N. in 1947 had not produced the anticipated results. While not saying it in so many words Nehru justifies the decision in retrospect in spite of the subsequent negative experience. He was very much influenced by his faith in the United Nations as a superior alternative to the futility of the League of Nations in 1938

which he had observed while in Europe. Of more permanent importance was the question of fundamental human rights in the state of Jammu and Kashmir which was brought forward by critics of Nehru and Abdullah on the State's legislation against the Zamindari System. In Kashmir, legislation was much harsher than in other parts of India. Nehru found no difficulty in accepting the compulsions of Abdullah and the State Government. In the United Nations negotiations, Dr. Graham, in Geneva, came to the conclusion that no immediate progress was possible. Asked about his views on the U.N. document at a press conference, Nehru politely said, "Dr. Graham's report is a good factual report and there is nothing more in it." In his letter to the Chief Ministers on the same subject he more or less repeated himself... "Dr. Graham's report has just been published... There is nothing very new in it and the position remains more or less where it was. So far as we are concerned we can expect no major change in the position we have taken up. We have gone as far as we can possibly go." Dr. Graham himself reported to the Security Council his failure to effect an agreement between India and Pakistan on de-militarization in Kashmir before a possible plebiscite. We are, here, at the beginning of a long barren record of more than four decades.

These were the months immediately after the finalization of the First Five Year Plan and the beginnings of the Community Development Projects. These were times of hope for Jawaharlal and his advisors. This was also an important example of U.S. influence in economic planning at the grassroots level in India. After all one of the permanent influences on Nehru during the thirties was Roosevelt's New Deal and the successful manner in which he tackled the great depression. Two other subjects of continuing relevance to the immediate present for us are the role of the Governor in the States and the question of the Privy Purses of the former rulers in the States. The episode on the Governors is minor but interesting. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a very senior Congress leader, had been appointed Governor of Madhya Pradesh. He had a sense of humour and, in his public speeches, ridiculed the pomp and ceremony, and the essential emptiness of his new role. Nehru was not amused. He explained to Pattabhi that he depended, to a great extent, on the objective, impersonal reports sent by the Governors of various States. They would supplement the dispatches from the State Governments. The question of Privy Purses bothered him. He did not criticize Patel and V.P. Menon for the arrangements they made at a difficult moment but he felt that these had to be short-lived as also the institution of the Raj Pramukh. These were months of very bad drought and famine in Rayalaseema and Nehru rediscovers his old self in touring the affected regions and talking to the people. He goes to several districts near Madras and spends some time in Hyderabad. Like in the old days he was recharging his batteries. Some of the problems are, of course, perennial. There is an inevitable but essentially minor episode about the differences between Mysore and the Madras governments on the distribution of the Cauvery Waters. The Prime Minister tries his best to persuade the Mysore Government to fulfil its obligations under the Agreement which dated back to 1924. The results of his efforts would, perhaps, be known in the next volume. There is, however, not much scope for optimism.

There is a brief terse reference to Nirad C. Chaudhuri, a government servant and an employee of the All India Radio, who had just published the *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. Nehru is upset at his attitude towards India and its government. "If he is such an admirer of the old British days and British ways, he might find a more congenial atmosphere elsewhere." He, however, made it clear that he was not suggesting that he should be given notice to depart but he felt that "we require some kind of an explanation from him". Obviously, the mini crisis was contained and Nirad Babu continued to stay on in the government for several more years.

The section on Foreign Affairs is expectedly interesting. There are developments in Nepal, Pakistan and Egypt which required the Prime Minister's attention. In the case of Nepal Nehru is concerned with the continu-

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There is no doubt that the documentation in these successive volumes will be of crucial importance to research scholars. Letters to the Chief Ministers and the internal notes in the government confirm the earlier impression most of us had about the essential transparency of Nehru's style of government.

ing recruitment of Nepalese Gurkhas in the British Army in Indian territory. He was surprised that this had been going on for some time and wanted to have a second look at it. The discussion is, however, moderate and unexcited. In Pakistan the problem was the continuing exodus from East Pakistan which went back to Nehru-Liaqat Agreement of 1951. There was a change of government by a military coup in Egypt and India was immediately interested only in protocol problems about our recognizing Egypt's relationship with Sudan. About the two Germanys, East and West, Nehru was very clear that because of the principle of continuity we should have full diplomatic relations only with West Germany. This was a decision which would be revised only in the early seventies after the two Germanys had sorted out the problem.

Of more fundamental importance to India was the border problem of Tibet in China. The Indian Ambassador, Sardar K.M. Panikkar, had advised that we should not bring up this subject. He argued that India's position on the frontier with Tibet was well-known to China. Since the Chinese Prime Minister had not raised the border issue in his interviews with him, his silence should be presumed to be acquiescence, if not acceptance, and it was wisest to ignore the subject. Nehru's own first feelings were divergent. In a note to the Foreign Secretary dated 25th July, 1952, one month after Panikkar's telegram, he said: "I am inclined to think that in our future talks or notes about Tibet we should mention the frontier. I appreciate the reasons which Panikkar advanced.... but I am beginning to feel that our attempt at being clever might overreach itself. I think it is better to be absolutely straight and frank." One of the sad 'might-have-beens' of the Nehru era.

There is no doubt that the documentation in these successive volumes will be of crucial importance to research scholars. Letters to the Chief Ministers and the internal notes in the government confirm the earlier impression most of us had about the essential transparency of Nehru's style of government. There is one caveat, however. Even forty years after the event there may be communications and notes which are not considered "safe" enough for publication. But we should assume that most of what is available has been published. The new documentation supplements the major speeches on most subjects in the Parliament and elsewhere which Nehru made during his long years of office and which have been published in several volumes. The real problem is the inevitable slowness of the publication of these volumes. We cannot have more than two to three volumes per year. Each volume deals with only three or four months. There are twelve more years to go till 1964. We should expect the series to be complete at the present rate only by 2010. One wonders whether it would be possible, in the meantime, to publish in separate volumes Nehru's speeches, notings and communications on major issues of India's foreign policy like Kashmir and India's relations with Pakistan, China, U.S. and western Europe. If a parallel project could be launched for this purpose and a number of research scholars deputed to carry out this task it would be most useful for projecting the country's foreign policy down the decades. All of Krishna Menon's speeches in the U.N. on Kashmir, Disarmament, and Colonialism have been published. He was, after all, only implementing Nehru's policies. It is most important to have first-hand knowledge of Nehru's thoughts. In this present volume, just for example, the Minutes of a Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet with the Kashmir Delegation have been published. It is in the form of a detailed note drafted by the Prime Minister himself. These discussions bring about the essential bona fides of India's approach to the question. There are bound to be occasions when we have been a trifle disingenuous. But that does not matter. The total picture would be most useful in reiterating today India's case of its most vexed foreign policy problem in an open and essentially credible manner.

A.K. Damodaran, a former diplomat and a senior Fellow at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (1980–81), is a well-known commentator on international affairs.

Honey On The Tongue

K.S. Dhillon

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Edited by Shiv Visvanathan and Harsh Sethi

Banyan Books, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 341, Rs. 400.00

Strangely not many scholars and social scientists have shown much interest in probing the nature and extent of corruption in Indian society in a scientific manner despite the growing volume of evidence indicating that the malady has now infected almost all spheres of our national life. It has clearly developed into a near omnipresent and omnipotent phenomenon in the country's power-structure. Having struck deep roots in the body-politic this hydra-headed monster acts as a strangle-hold in all the decision-making processes not only in governmental ministries and departments but also in most other segments of the economy and business. No developmental initiative in the public or private sector, no official or non-official policy, no growth scheme, no financial, trade, business or market activity is immune from this malodorous and cancerous contagion. It is only recently that the deeply baleful impact of widespread venality on the country's economic and political health has been fully realized by alert sections of our intelligentsia and empirical, sociological, historical and administrative studies undertaken to fully grasp and highlight the intricacies and complexities of the malaise of corruption as an intrinsic part of modern Indian polity. The exponential broadening of the governmental charter of responsibilities, consequent upon the adoption of state planning as a system of development and the increasing involvement of the executive in economic activity, opened up innumerable new and virgin avenues of dishonesty and distortions in public life. The unchecked expansion in bureaucratic hierarchies aided in several ways to widen the base of improbity and the reach of the venal official.

The book under review fulfills a long-felt need for a comprehensive but eclectic study of the anatomy and pathology of corruption in Indian society. In adopting the case-method of narration, the authors have greatly enhanced the quality and value of this perceptive work in a rather complex and difficult area. Cases have been selected from a wide range of governmental, public sector and private enterprises to pinpoint the near universal prevalence of underhand, manipulative and dishonest practices in all spheres of national endeavour and developmental processes. From Pratap Singh Kairon and Krishna Menon in the early post-independence years, through the Emergency excesses; the Shah Commission probing those excesses; crime, terror and corruption of the Mumbai Mafia; corporate manoeuverings and decay in SAIL, Telecom, Maruti and financial jugglery in I.T.C. and the loot in securities and shares by Harshad Mehta et al., many major scams and scandals involving the high and mighty as also the rich and the famous, have been deftly and thoroughly uncovered. Nehru's stubborn reluctance to deal with and discipline many of his close friends and colleagues who came under deep suspicion in the very first decade after the dismantling of the empire perhaps laid the foundations of the phenomenal escalation in corruption and venality in Indian public life in subsequent decades. It is unclear whether his unshaken faith in Kairon's dynamism, Krishna Menon's patriotism or Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed's loyalty to the Indian case in Kashmir, sprang basically from his passionate drive to accelerate India's development and progress at whatever cost or simply from naivety. It is somewhat odd that he failed to withdraw support or patronage even when the blemishes of impropriety in

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The book under review fulfills a long-felt need for a comprehensive but eclectic study of the anatomy and pathology of corruption in Indian society.

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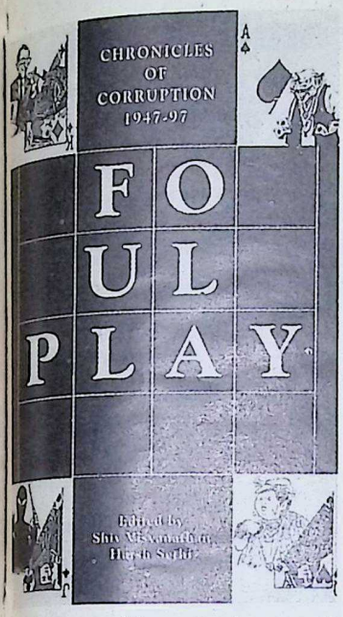

Indian Police—A History

K.F. Rustamji

DEFENDERS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT—RULER-SUPPORTIVE POLICE FORCES OF SOUTH ASIA

By K.S. Dhillon

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla, pp. 290, Rs. 300.00

Analytical studies of government and its institutions, by scholars, so abundant in the western world, are a somewhat uncommon feature in South Asian countries. While American and European Universities and institutions of higher learning have been regularly producing high-calibre research work in the area of public administration, our own scholastic community has by and large been avoiding such initiatives, and has generally failed to engage in serious and meaningful research in this direction, though of late some welcome change is noticeable. Among governmental departments, police has attracted the least attention for obvious reasons. One can hardly think of a work on the Indian police to compare with, for example, the seminal studies of British police history and philosophy by Charles Reith and others which have, in no small measure, enhanced the world's knowledge and understanding of that fascinating force.

In the Indian context, David Bayley's *The Police and Political Development in India* (1969) remains a classic and the only authoritative work on many aspects of the Indian police, though some of its conclusions, such as that "the police have played a neutral role as mediators" (p. 411) are no longer valid with increasing politicization since the early 1970s completely transforming the nature of police organization in India. With few exceptions, among them the very well-researched work in two volumes by A.S. Gupta, most available literature on the Indian police consists merely of memoirs and reminiscences of police administrators and although the latter do provide insights into the organization (e.g. Griffiths 1971, Lobo 1992, Venugopal 1993) most of these books are anecdotal and rarely go beyond personal narration and make little attempt to make a systematic study of the police departments. Some other studies are informative but have a limited focus. The eight volume reports of the National Police Commission (1978–81) are comprehensive and comparable to the reports of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice-1967, in the U.S.A. Unfortunately the former are not widely available and have not been seriously looked at by scholars. Also, in the fast changing political and social environment in India, most such studies soon become dated.

It is in such a context that Kirpal Dhillon's work on the history of the subcontinental police from ancient times to 1947—the year of India's (and Pakistan's) independence and partition—deserves to be studied. In an endeavour to situate the police forces of South Asia in their ruler-supportive role in a deep historical perspective, the study breaks fresh ground in several significant ways. As a perceptive analysis of the evolutionary brick-work on which were built the foundations of the present-day sub-culture and attitudinal framework of South Asian police, the book assumes extraordinary importance. This book should help promote a process of social introspection by presenting a historical paradigm to it.

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his proteges and favourites became all too glaring. Thus he continued to tolerate the 'bosses' in the Congress Party even when some of them were known to be making a pile on the sly. The same class of leaders would later form what would be called the 'syndicate' and confront Nehru's daughter in a different context.

By positioning these chronicles of corruption in a deep historical perspective, the editors have helpfully provided a much-needed insight into the philosophical, cultural and psychological sinews of the phenomenology of corruption in pre-colonial Indian society. The final chapter titled 'Cultural Soundings' very vividly delineates the core dichotomies between attitudes, approaches and thought processes in respect of the concepts of honesty and dishonesty, integrity and venality, neutrality and partisanship etc. in the Indian and western framework of values. The conflict between the traditional charismatic-patrimonial style of governance and the rationalist-legalist systems of European political philosophy (Burke, Bentham, Mill) remained unresolved throughout the major period of British rule. The bulk of the Indian people continued to feel puzzled at the unfamiliar and unorthodox stance adopted by early British rulers to their age-old beliefs about such personal matters as caste, untouchability, widowhood, pollution, contentment etc. Showing favours and helping the 'biradari' (clan), which was an obligatory part of the exercise of power in the Indian (oriental?) tradition, was decried by the new government as 'nepotism' and considered a form of dishonesty. Many other western practices also left them baffled. It was not till well into the 19th century, and specially after the cataclysmic events of 1857 that a modicum of insight into the oriental mind was precipitated by the diligent labours of several erudite scholars and researchers who dedicated themselves to a thorough study of the classical texts and scriptural literature of the subcontinent. In the process, the concepts of the rule of law and due process, which were essential ingredients of Macaulay's vision of an ideal system of administration also went through a process of metamorphosis. However, the durability of these essentially western concepts, enforceable through western jurisprudential procedures, would come to be seriously questioned in all the subcontinental nations soon after the end of British rule.

The slow process of erosion which began soon after Nehru's death would acquire a much faster pace and velocity with Indira Gandhi's Emergency and thereafter. The post-Emergency climate of licentiousness and disregard for legal and procedural norms which soon took root in the polity would later blur all distinctions between right and wrong, proper and improper, lawful and unlawful and spawn several scams and scandals of mind-boggling proportions in every sphere and aspect of national activity, some of which have been so graphically described in this seminal study.

One can well conceive of the hazards and risks involved in a study of contemporary history. The conclusions are capable of being challenged by the protagonists of the episodes unless the writer's views are firmly based on unassailable material. In any case, since some of the cases are still under investigation or sub-judice, the scope for controversy is obviously quite ample. One can be sure that the contributors and editors would have gone to great lengths to be doubly sure of what they narrate and meticulously researched their theories and subjects. The book displays a high level of analytical ability and a sharp comprehension of complex social and political phenomena. Obviously each contributor is a specialist in the subject he deals with. Written in a gripping, lucid and sensitive style of narration, the range of vocabulary employed to express events, concepts and shades of thought is indicative of learning and maturity. Each word is chosen with great care and circumspection in ensuring accuracy. The book is well brought out with several innovations in its production.

K. S. Dhillon, a former director general of Police, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, is the author of Defendens of the Establishment: Ruler supporting Police Forces of South Asia (1998).

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The police in the Indian subcontinent though of a much older vintage, but essentially a product of the Indian Police Act of 1861, continues to be frozen in a mindset heavily coated with mid-nineteenth century values and attitudes, suited more to a colonialist regime than modern democratic polities.

The evolution and growth of most Asian and African police forces was primarily determined by the demands, and the influence, of colonial powers to serve their own alien interests. The police in the Indian subcontinent though of a much older vintage, but essentially a product of the Indian Police Act of 1861, continues to be frozen in a mindset heavily coated with mid-nineteenth century values and attitudes, suited more to a colonialist regime than modern democratic polities.

The entire corpus of criminal law and the justice system itself remain substantially Victorian in concept and design and heavily redolent of mid-nineteenth century flavours, thus proving to be an uneasy instrument to meet the needs of an end-of-the millennium society. Dhillon wades through the whole course of the history of institutions, both social and political in the Indian subcontinent from the historically obscure ancient times through medieval ages to the considerably better documented British period to make his point: that *South Asian Police forces have always been ruler-supportive and never citizen-friendly*. Starting with an exposition on the evolution and institution of the police in the Indian context, he goes on to explore its growth and development during the subsequent periods of Indian history till independence in 1947. The chapters dealing with the British period are understandably more elaborate and informative. The prolonged labours of the Indian Police Commission of 1902–03 are covered in great detail to bring out the growing chasm between public expectations from the police in a climate of rising social awareness towards the end of the nineteenth century and the requirements of an imperialist government for a repressive and efficient agency for perpetuating their hold on the 'Jewel in the Crown'. Curzon with his characteristic dynamism and vision, sought to sharpen and re-shape the Indian police strategies and responses by rushing through draconian legislation and administrative measure so as to make the police, not the army, the mainstay and prime defender of the Indian empire and the establishment. By giving a concrete structure and design to what was later to grow into the Intelligence Bureau and provincial Special Branches and strengthening the concept of armed police units, he ensured that the South Asian police would always be in the forefront in quelling nationalist upsurge and would grow from strength to strength to keep pace with the spread and sweep of the Indian freedom struggle. The rapidly unfolding political developments after the arrival of Gandhi as the supreme leader of the Congress party, the growing communal cleavage between Hindus and Muslims, leading to ever escalating sectarian riots, the so-called Pakistan Resolution of 1940, the Quit India agitation and the pre-Partition rioting and killings have all been described with an extraordinary clarity and precision. The book also contains a wealth of data about crime, police strength and expenditure figures of various stages of its development during this century.

To quote from the foreword by John Alderson, an eminent British officer himself, who has taught police subjects in British universities for over a decade, "Dhillon is a writer whose communicative skills enable him to speak effectively to the world's police and police administrators. He is politically astute as this book bears witness. But at all times his criticisms are fair and being a man of great moral courage, he avoids undue reticence in expressing them". With increasing interaction between the world's police forces and the growing intermeshing of criminality across the world, there is need for more perceptive literature on the police of various countries and regions. Dhillon's work should go a long way in filling a gap in international police literature. Since the book is the product of a study he undertook while working as a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, he has been able to add a scholarly approach to a wealth of experience gained over a period of three and a half decades in the I.P.S. A fairly detailed epilogue tries to lend topicality to the book by narrating some important events between 1947 and 1997. One hopes this would, in the not too distant future, be converted into a full-fledged book.

K.F. Rustamji, a former member of the Indian Police Service, retired as Inspector General of Police, Madhya Pradesh.

Determinants of Fertility

K. Saradamoni

KERALA'S DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION, DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Edited by K.C. Zachariah, S. Irudaya Rajan

Sage, 1997, pp. 367, Rs. 450.00

Demography was understood as the study of populations and the decennial census reports of India prior to our Independence contained much more of descriptive information than what they contain since Independence. However, apart from the several volumes of numbers of the people based on age, sex, occupation, religion, rural/urban and similar characteristics, the census authorities also bring out a large number of special reports or monographs. Over the years there have been changes in definitions causing difficulties in comparison. However, it would not be a mistake to say that the data produced by the census in the last one hundred years or so are not yet fully used.

The contours of demography have changed and the scope of the discipline have broadened. This can easily be seen from the contents of the book under review, *Kerala's Demographic Transition: Determinants and Consequences* edited by K.C. Zachariah and S. Irudaya Rajan, two active demographers in the State. The topics the volume covers include besides demographic transition, low birth weight and the need for nutrition for pregnant women, rethinking on the relation between education and fertility and migration. These should be of interest to all social scientists, planners, medical personnel and concerned citizens.

Population and all the attributes given above are very important in understanding Kerala as they are important ingredients in the much publicized 'Kerala model'. In simple words the latter means that the state has achieved considerable progress in the social sector though the performance in the economic front is in no way satisfactory. The statistics that are used to support the above are a sex-ratio favourable to women, female literacy, low infant mortality, longevity, acceptance of small family norm etc. besides such things as primary health centres, land reforms, social security initiatives and above all a politically conscious, alert people. Kerala's demographic transition has received much acclaim independent of the Kerala model. Here again, literacy and education mainly of women, good family planning delivery and certain historical developments peculiar to the state are found to be the reasons. However, in the papers presented in the volume one can see that the exuberance demographers used to show earlier has given place to more cautious and careful observations. More than one person has observed that the state has experienced a rapid decline in fertility in the recent past. "As per the current fertility levels women will have an average of two children each during their child bearing years, indicating below replacement level fertility. Fertility differences by urban-rural residence, education, religion and scheduled caste/scheduled tribe have also been declining."

Both the causes and consequences of the demographic transition which the state has witnessed has also been enquired into, though it is neither easy nor correct to come to any categoric conclusions. Radha Devi comparing Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, asks the question, Is there any link between education and fertility? and comes to the conclusion that factors other than education—what the author calls the socio-cultural mileu in which a person lives override the individual education characteristics in determining fertility.

R. S. Kurup in his study on Low birth weight and need for nutritional care for pregnant women tries to highlight an issue which has failed to attract sufficient attention. The data for the study were collected from two hospitals in Thiruvananthapuram. Surprisingly the hospital records which did not show the addresses of pregnant women made it impossible to follow up the cases after the women were discharged from the hospital. The author tries to draw some tentative conclusions. The low weight of babies could be caused by lack of sufficient nutritional food while pregnant and that

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When we say that women and the level of literacy they have attained have influenced them to desire 'quality children' it can also mean that the poor women wish their children to have a slightly better life than what they had or that they were fully conscious about the dire future awaiting their children.

could be the result of insufficient income in the family. While his focus is on poor families we have information from economically strong families where also the phenomenon occurs. We have to look for other reasons too. One, pregnancy by and large has ceased to be seen as something normal. On the other hand, from very early stage of pregnancy, doctor's advice is sought. Just as in the case of an ailment, medicines are taken from very early stage. All those can have their consequences.

Another aspect of Kerala's demographic transition is the rise in the proportion of the elderly in the population. Udaya Rajan and his colleague U.S. Mishra who were pursuing this question for quite some time discusses the various sides of this issue in their paper 'Population Ageing: Causes and Consequences'. As in the case of many other things Kerala can claim to have initiated several programmes to help the aged. There are fully paid government run institutions for the economically weak among the aged. There are private institutions too catering to the well-to-do as well as the poor. There are plenty of persons to whom the idea of the elders bring segregated does not appeal. Many feel unwanted at home and outside, others do not have any sense of purpose in their lives. It is high time that the societal attitude to the aged change and the latter are treated as essential part of the society, people with full rights to live as responsible citizens.

The papers under the topic migration deal with three different aspects. While one paper examines the migration of peasants from Travancore to Malabar in the early part of the century the other two focus on migration to the Gulf countries which is a relatively recent phenomenon. There again one of the authors who studied the women left behind by the migrants found that the former learned to cope with the new situation, when they have to take decisions and manage domestic (including financial) matters. However, the author warns that it would be callous to suggest a path like male overseas migration, for the empowerment of women. The third article in this section, Economic Consequences of Gulf Migration, though not strictly focused on the demographic side points to the absolutely essential need to reschedule development priorities in the state. The paper ends with the following observation: 'The seriousness of the economic situation in the state has been camouflaged by the remittance inflows and rising levels of consumption. The dependence on remittances has also introduced an element of uncertainly into the socio-economic scenerio'. The paper adds that emigration and remittances alone cannot break down the structures of under-development. It is nearly half a decade since this was written and one does not see any change in the scenerio. In a state where a sense of right is exhibited by the people practically everywhere, they have not yet established their right to work or to receive gainful employment.

This takes us back to something which we constantly hear, viz that the state has performed extremely well on the social sector which is missing in the economic front. When we say that women and the level of literacy they have attained have influenced them to desire 'quality children' it can also mean that the poor women wish their children to have a slightly better life than what they had or that they were fully conscious about the dire future awaiting their children. They agree to prevent the birth of such children without knowing the full impact of the various methods they use to prevent pregnancies, even on their own body and health. And how many women of this class have seen their dream come true relating to the one or two children they give birth to? I am yet to see a study on this.

The book under review has touched upon a large number of issues and has placed before the readers several questions to pursue.

The papers in this volume were presented in one of the sub-themes in the International Congress on Kerala Studies organized by the AKG Centre for Research and studies in August 1994 at Thiruvananthapuram. There were several dozen sub-themes where nearly fifteen hundred participants discussed a large variety of issues. This is the first volume I have seen where the papers of a sub-theme in the above congress have been put together. The editors deserve appreciation.

K. Saradomani, a senior economist, was formerly associated with the Indian statistical Institute, New Delhi.

Documenting Environmental Regimes

Manju Chellani

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW: BASIC DOCUMENTS AND SELECT REFERENCES

Compiled by Najmul Arif

Lancer Books, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 635, Rs. 750.00

Environmental issues are entwined with the life of each human being all over the earth, sometimes in the most unexpected ways. Concern for the consistent deterioration of our environment has grown dramatically in the past few decades and is here to stay. It has increasingly been reflected in the mounting public opinion, which has pressurized governments, especially in the West, to demonstrate efforts towards the preservation of the environment. The response of the lawmakers to these pressing concerns has been the introduction of unusually dynamic legislations to combat pollution of seas and rivers, to conserve endangered species and to regulate disposal of hazardous wastes, among many other challenges.

However, the expectation that domestic legislation alone can deal with environmental problems has long been recognized as being unrealistic. It is a trite observation that water and atmosphere know no boundaries. Any change in their quality reflects outside the geographical boundaries. Environmental disasters related to acid rain, desertification, depletion of bio-diversity and global warming have provided unmistakable proof of this over the years. These have respected no demarcations between continents and languages; and can be battled with only by uniting efforts on a global level. Initiating corrective environmental measures burdens an individual nation's economy, placing it at a disadvantage in the world market. Hence the cooperation between countries and adoption of common standards and regulations, which are hallmarks of international law, become desirable which, more than any other branch of international law, has responded by shaping its volume and stature to the increasing demands made upon it. A large corpus of conventions, principles, agreements etc., has been developed by the international fora in the past few decades.

As lawyers, activists and researchers know only too well, a chronological documentation of the major and not-so-well-known legal instruments is one of their most necessary requirements. The texts are generally available but obtaining each from its individual source is time-consuming and expensive, hence a good compilation of the same is so useful to those working in the domestic and international arenas of environmental law. Compilations by western authors are available in India but most of them are priced forbiddingly for Indian libraries and individuals. The need for a compilation which is handy, comprehensive and affordable, has been felt for a long time.

The book under review has taken a step towards fulfilling this need. It is a collection of instruments of international environmental law, compiled by Najmul Arif. It is second in the *Environmental Law Series*, under the general editorship of Prof. Rahmatullah Khan. As Arif says in the preface, "This compilation contains carefully chosen international instruments dealing with environmental law including "hard and "soft" law." For most purposes all such compilations have to be read together with existing and developing customary international law, if a complete picture of the contemporary interrelationships is to emerge.

This book is divided into three parts. Part I—*"General Principles"*—contains the instruments which deal with environment as a whole. These include: Declaration of the Permanent Sovereignty Over National Resources, 1962; Declaration of the United Nations Conference as the Human Environment, 1972; World Charter for Nature, 1982; The Hague Declaration on the Environment, 1989 and Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992. Part II comprises sections which take up individual issues, Antarctica, atmosphere, bio-diversity, desertification, endangered species, forest, hazardous waste transportation, industrial accidents and wetlands. Part III—*Implementation, Enforcement and Financial Mechanism*— documents the texts of The Global Environment Facility 1991 and Instrument for the Establishment

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A welcome addition in Part II would be a section on nuclear risks. Its nexus to environmental damage is obvious and its implications in international environmental law cannot be emphasized enough.

of the Restructured Global Environment Facility, 1994. The part-wise classification is a refreshing point of departure from the usual issue-based classification.

In total, this compilation gives twenty-nine entries, including a few protocols. In a work of this kind, the compiler has to sift through a plethora of the existing literature and decide upon the inclusions in accordance with the selection criteria. True, the criteria differ with the nature of the objectives and the intended readership, but in this case, some very significant instruments have been left out. The reason for this or the selection criteria in general has not been made clear anywhere in the compilation, contrary to the standard practice. Some conspicuous omissions are the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, 1979 Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Pumping of Wastes and other Matter, 1972 and International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994. Most of them are well-known global instruments which have contributed in moulding the international environmental law to its present shape. It is interesting to note the Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests, 1992 included here which is not easily accessible otherwise, as also a few other entries in the compilation. But since Arif has stated that the main agenda of this book is to serve as a useful research tool, the above-mentioned absences do blunt its edge. Nor do we find here the instruments originating from the European Union or other regional arrangements. These may not be strictly international in nature but nevertheless have considerable value as *opino juris*. They have certainly served as guidelines for the evolution of present-day thought in international environmental law. For instance, Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and National Habitats, 1979; African Convention as the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1968 and ASEAN Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and National Resources, 1985 are as significant to a student of international environmental law as the premier international instruments.

A welcome addition in Part II would be a section on nuclear risks. Its nexus to environmental damage is obvious and its implications in international environmental law cannot be emphasized enough. Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident, 1986 and Convention on Nuclear Safety, 1994 generally do find a place in the contemporary standard compilations of international environmental law.

As a "useful research tool", it is to the credit of this compilation that full texts of all the entries have been reproduced, as distinct from "considered significant" excerpts, common in many similar standard (western) works. In the same vein, Arif has provided select references at the end of each section. Majority of these refer to articles in reputed journals. One cannot help wishing that the array of authoritative works by individual authors and international organizations had also found their representation here, providing a bird's eye-view of the burgeoning environment jurisprudence.

Again, in keeping with the aim of the book, all cross-sections of the readership would have benefitted even more from it if a concise background of each entry had been given before its text; e.g. its raison d'etre, formulation-history, its place in the existing legal framework, list of member-states, related documents, its envisaged utility and importance. Still more important, the date and place of adoption of each instrument should have been included; perhaps on the lines of the first book of the series *Environmental Laws of India*.

This hard-bound compilation is set in a visual-friendly format. Some typos have managed to escape proof reading. The reviewer hopes for other important pieces of information in the next edition e.g. the locations of *travaux preparatoires*, relevant United Nations General Assembly Resolutions etc.

The importance of this compilation lies in being the first indigenous one of its kind. We look forward to the further publications of the *Environmental Law Series* of which the present compilation is a part.

Manju Chellani is working for a Ph.D. degree in the Faculty of Law at the University of Delhi; the area of her study is animal rights.

CHILDREN'S FICTION IN ENGLISH IN INDIA: TRENDS AND MOTIFS

Prema Srinivasan

The book provides a comprehensive introduction to the historical dimensions and theoretical aspects of children's literature in India. The study includes :

- A basic compact introduction to children's fiction
- A historical reconstruction of children's literature in India: the development of publishing houses and an analysis of accepted classics of children's fiction by Indian authors.
- A survey of Children's reading habits and adult attitudes towards children's leisure reading material.
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The book is meant to be a valuable guide to publishers and writers of children's books as well as parents and teachers who are anxious to foster the reading habit in their wards a laudable attempt to save the book from competing stimuli.

ISBN: 81-85427-84-4 **222 pages** **1998** **Price : Rs. 200.00**

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The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth

Gagan Gill

THE SEA AND OTHER STORIES

By Ram Kumar. Translated from Hindi by Alok Bhalla.

Published by the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, 1997, pp.144, Rs.160. 00

Not long ago, while interviewing Ram Kumar, the distinguished Indian artist at work, for my book *A Journey Within*, focussed on his oeuvre, I had remarked, *"In all your figurative paintings, the protagonists look out of the canvas. They are never seen looking at each other and they never have their back to the viewer. The feeling is as if all relationships were missing on that side of the canvas, and whatever relationships may be possible, is possible only when the viewer returns their gaze, making up for the missing link... "* And in his typical elusive manner, Ram Kumar had responded, "There was no mystery intended in showing them that way..."

And now, some years later, as I read his fiction again, that sensation of hopeless alienation grips me again, as if even though this feeling may have left his canvases after he moved on to the Banaras phase and eventually found the peace of a mystic in his nameless abstracts, it still permeates the world of his writing. It is a delicate spot where his protagonists stand—reasonably away from the point of neurosis, yet precariously close to despair.

Who is Ram Kumar, the story-teller? And the painter? Is there a third Ram Kumar, too? The one who comes up on the surface only in his personal notebooks? (I know *him* because he allowed me to know him when I was putting together *A journey Within*.) Which basement is *he* in? Where can one possibly look for him? Ram Kumar is as quiet as his paintings and as sparsely worded as his stories. For sure, the clues ought to be somewhere there—if not in the text, then perhaps in the unwritten subtext. He is one of the few contemporary artists who challenge your curiosity so deeply by their understatement. The more enigmatic they are, the farther you wish to go after them.

It is fascinating to see the progress of Ram Kumar, *the pilgrim*. Over the years, his relationship with the visual art has become non-wordy, without figures and without titles. But has something gone quiet in his writing too? Yes. The Present book *The Sea and Other Stories*, translated and competently introduced by Alok Bhalla, and elegantly published by the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla bears that out.

Long before Ram Kumar became the distinguished artist that he is today, he was a much loved writer of Hindi. He had begun publishing his short stories in the language magazines some time in the late 1940s and by as early as 1953, he had published his first book, a novel, *Ghar Bane Ghar Tute*, about the plight of refugee families after Partition. It came out from the leading publishing house Radhakrishna Prakashan and that must speak for the seriousness with which he was considered by the Hindi literati way back. It will be of interest today that it was his meagre earnings from the contributions he made to the Hindi journals that saw him through in Paris, (in those days Indian rupee could be freely exchanged in the international market, it was four rupees to a dollar), as he learnt his craft as an artist at the atelier of Fernand Leger, one of the great French masters of this century.

Perhaps it is this which makes Ram Kumar's writing life, too, very mystifying—for he has never really ceased to be a writer. *"I attach more importance to literature,"* he had said in that conversation, *"It is sad that I could not devote as much time to writing as I had wanted to."* A modest statement, considering that there is a wealth of writing done by him, two novels, one book of travelogues, nine books of short stories, and numerous articles scattered over in Hindi journals on his painter colleagues. The only thing that overshadows his fine writing is his celebrity status as a painter. And who will grudge this more than he himself?

Ram Kumar is as quiet as his paintings and as sparsely worded as his stories. For sure, the clues ought to be somewhere there—if not in the text, then perhaps in the unwritten subtext.

The Sea and Other Stories is a collection of seven short stories taken from different periods of Ram Kumar's writing life, (one wishes, original dates of their first appearing in a book form were given), and what makes it truly striking is the discretion that has gone into its selection.

Almost all the tales represented here are well known stories of Ram Kumar, and although they are narratives of assorted situations, a familiar undercurrent runs through all of them. From a hurtful incident of the childhood, to the troubled moments that haunt most Indian father-son relationships, to tense situations where they become so because love is never talked out loud—they are all tales of emotional displacement /estrangement, with invariably, always, a frozen painful moment in their heart of hearts.

These are the stories of the weak, and the *meek*. How one day, it will be they who will have the final word. The protagonists here simply don't speak up. It is as if they submit—willingly and hopelessly—to an overwhelming wave coming to engulf them. Not that they don't ask their questions. In fact, it is this inner turmoil they go through that makes them so memorable. As if all this while, the drama were taking place at two places. *Outside* the strong, the domineering, the bully, wins. *Inside* the weak *watches*, watches his own suffering, making the victory look so petty, so absurd, so ridiculous and unbecoming.

And where does this lead them? Almost always, they emerge wiser, stronger, clearer in their mind and soul about their place in the world. The intriguing aspect of all Ram Kumar's stories is—this change may not happen within the *time* of the story, *but—somewhere in the neighbourhood of that instance*. For example, a story like *Reva* cannot happen twice. The weak will not be weak forever. If nothing else, in the act of recounting will be their redemption. Here is Reva, this young girl, who is liked so much by the women in the family that they want her to be a part of it by making a match, first with the eldest visiting brother who is in the army (he rejects her), then arranging the match with the middle brother who actually loves her (this too is foiled by the domineering father), and finally, the distraught girl is being consoled by the youngest brother. A story peopled by hapless characters. And what does one see?

"It struck me that her arms were wrapped around her knees in the same way as Manjhale Bhaiya's arms were wrapped around his head when he slept at night. There was some kinship between the two."

Quite a visual detail. And perceptions like this *colour* most crucial scenes. In another powerful story *Termites*, the son sees the reflection of his father looking at him in the mirror, as he puts the razor too his face—and shudders. The perspective of a painting is often used to make the literary structure of a situation taut. Even as the tales end on an inconsolable note, they leave behind a graphic trail of subtle nuances of human behaviour.

In a way, all Ram Kumar stories are about lost moments, and how one may never make amends for them, harder though he may try, in the rest of one's years. Many a time, it is their inherent withdrawn nature that makes the characters damned. Most love situations are troubled because that love is not demonstrated. It is as bad as love lost. Most of the times, it is somebody other than the loved one, who knows that love exists.

For instance, in *Termites* it is the mother who knew how much the father cared for his family, the son only resents him. In *The Sound of Crickets*, it is first the mother, then the servant, then a visiting girl friend of the son who knows the depth of father-son bond. Left to themselves, they hardly communicate. In both the situations, it is Father, Son and an insurmountable Silence. Even in a story like *Shilalekh*, where once the protagonists had struck perfect harmony, the relationship is doomed. The extraordinary thing about these stories is that even when there is some bitter moment in the relationship, there is also some very tender moment that binds them together. Not in the real time, but in remembrance. And it is that which makes it hurt more. Tenderness haunts them as much as grievance.

Absence seems to speak much more to the characters than the actual presence ever did. Absence that is made of longing, memory and an innocuous visual detail. It is a play of human beings acted out in a barren landscape. It is a show that has gone on for ages. It is the landscape of God. Ram Kumar only recalls the spectacle in his stories. Hence, when Ram Kumar says, *"Sometimes I want nothing to happen in my paintings"*, one must know, it is not an unambiguous statement. It can only come from someone who has been in the thick of it all.

Nothing can be overwhelming. And who would know it better than Ram Kumar? All Ram Kumar's art is about that.

Gagan Gill is a poet and critic. She has published two books of poems and edited Ram Kumar - A Journey Within.

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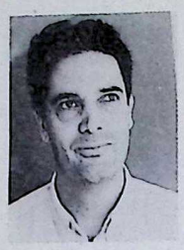
Letter from London

Stephen Moss



Biographies are a source of endless conflict. Who has the right to sum up a life? What is the value of an authorized biography? How should an individual's legacy be judged? Two recent books have reopened the arguments—a life of the TV playwright Dennis Potter by Humphrey Carpenter and a biography of the novelist Marguerite Duras. Two controversial lives containing complex "truths" that are now being fought over by relatives and writers.

Potter, who died in 1994, is a difficult subject for a biographer. He was a confessional playwright who wrote from life, but not, he insisted, slavishly. He sought to probe the workings of the mind—its self-deceptions, confusions, occasional shafts of understanding. The lesson should be a daunting one for a biographer, and it is not lost on Carpenter, the chronicler of lives as complex as Ezra Pound, Benjamin Britten and W.H. Auden. Here he is describing Potter's apparently autobiographical novel *Hide and Seek*: "[It] seems to have been devised as a trap for Potter's biographer, whose research was bound to reveal that he had had an appointment with a psychiatrist at an old London hospital, made confessions that he had been with a certain number of prostitutes, and at the same time idealized women sexlessly. The novel lies in wait for the discovery of these facts, which seem to disclose the 'real' Dennis Potter. Its message seems to be: "I have been playing hide-and-seek with you. You think you are writing my life, and I am leaning on your shoulder, writing it for you. You, even you, are a character in my story. I can manipulate you too." Even though the biography is billed as having been "authorized"—the family had some say in the choice of biographer, but no control over the content of the book—Potter's daughter, Sarah, has castigated Carpenter as "lazy and sloppy". She has taken particular exception to Carpenter's conclusion that Potter did indeed, as he had confessed to friends, employ the services of prostitutes. She dismissed the notion as "absolute tosh" and said that her father was a fantasist who enjoyed playing mental games with his friends.

Her dismissal of Carpenter's conclusion is arguable—most of the evidence points to Potter having been telling the truth when he made his confessions—but her contention that the biographer has failed to capture the truth of her father's personality is undeniable. There is no sense of a multifaceted human being here, just a relentlessly troubled man fuelled by work and sexual neurosis.

Carpenter had obvious difficulty with an incident in which Potter's uncle sexually abused him as a 10-year-old. Potter described the experience in varying degrees of luridness, sometimes saying it was crucial to his psychosexual problems, sometimes not. Carpenter, while acknowledging its influence, is never quite sure what weight to give it, and is usually content to quote exhaustively from all the often conflicting interviews in which Potter mentions it.

Carpenter tends to stand back and let the material—Potter's work and letters, the reminiscences of friends—speak for itself. But that makes for a fragmented narrative and an incomplete portrait of the man. It is the worst of both worlds: Carpenter is clearly most interested in Potter's sexual hangups and his problems with women, rather than his work, but he fails to marshal his evidence into a coherent portrait of the playwright. He simply parrots Potter's own delusions, contradictions and sexual obsessions.

France has recently gone through its own biography battle, with Laure Adler's book about the celebrated author Marguerite Duras, who died in 1996. The parallels with the Potter biography are striking: Duras used her own life story in her novels, but much embroidered; she had a series of complicated relationships with men, one of which her biographer interprets as prostitution, another she paints as Vichy collaborationism; and Duras's family are outraged by the book—her son called the allegations "unbearable" and said the interpretation of the relationship with a Gestapo officer was a distortion.

The Duras book has not yet appeared in English, so I must for the moment suspend detailed judgment. From the reports I have read, it appears thoughtful, by no means merely an exercise in muck-raking, but schematic, guilty of the besetting sin of biographers—the desire to impose order where none exists, to seek logic and causality where human beings act on instinct.

Alain Vircondelet, who had an affair with Duras and wrote a biography of her, doubted whether a definitive account could ever be written. All interpretations were valid, he suggested, because "she invented her own life and legend". The critic Pascale Frey made a similar point: "Marguerite Duras's entire existence was packed with contradictions and ambiguities."

A truly great biography will allow for those contradictions, rather than attempt to iron them out in pursuit of a simple conclusion or saleable headline. Lives aren't logical; often we deceive ourselves; what we say and what we do can be very different. Potter and Duras, complex and highly self-conscious writers, emphasise the irreducibility of a life.

Biographies are popular with publishers, who see them as attractive to both book-buyers and the media. Publishers are shameless about producing instant biographies of current stars which have little or no intrinsic value. Similarly, they have no compunction about playing up the most scurrilous aspects of those subjects' lives at the expense of the broader picture of a life.

That is publishing, that is journalism, and when family members complain it is all grist to the publicity mill. But we should be aware that the "truth" of a life is desperately hard to find and express, and that honesty, assiduousness and perhaps sympathy are all necessary if a biography is to be taken seriously. There are too many hack biographies, too many commercially driven biographies, perhaps too little humility among biographers. Biography is the hardest genre; biographers and publishers seem to want to persuade us it is the easiest. For the art to be mastered, it really is—as Boswell discovered—a lifetime's work.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of The Guardian.

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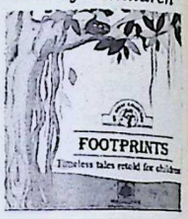

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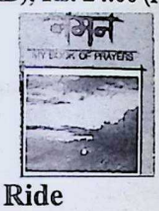

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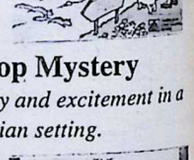

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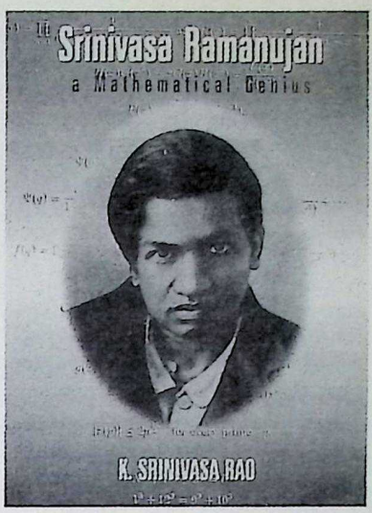
The Man Who 'Knew Infinity'

Rishi Srinivasa Iyengar

SRINIVASA RAMANUJAN: A MATHEMATICAL GENIUS

By K. Srinivasa Rao

East West Books, Madras, 1998, pp. 231, Rs. 175.00



As a student of mathematics who probably rates 0.5 on Hardy's famous scale, it is not inappropriate that I review this book. For even I, philistine, have been captivated by Ramanujan's strange and beautiful formulae. Consider:

$$\frac{1}{1+\dfrac{e^{-2\pi\sqrt{5}}}{1}+\dfrac{e^{-4\pi\sqrt{5}}}{1+\cdots}} = \left\{\frac{\sqrt{5}}{1+\sqrt[5]{\left\{5^{3/4}\left(\frac{\sqrt{5}-1}{2}\right)^{5/2}-1\right\}}}-\frac{\sqrt{5}+1}{2}\right\}e^{2\pi/\sqrt{5}}$$

"This must be true, for if [it] were not, no one would have had the imagination to invent [it]." However, most people that I have met view Ramanujan as symbolic of conditions in India.'[1] His story is in some way India's story.

At first sight, I was not impressed with Srinivasa Rao's book. It seemed a hagiography in the style of a CBSE textbook: important points in bold or capitalized. Fortunately, I got over this rather patronizing prejudgement as the extent of the author's research became clear.

Robert Kanigel's moving account of the 'man who knew infinity' contained only glimpses of mathematics. This is not the case with *Srinivasa Ramanujan: A Mathematical Genius*. Much of his work, particularly his letter to Hardy, receives attention here; the fascination of his mathematics becomes apparent It also refutes the dismissal of number theory by a teacher as 'mere calculation'. There is also a great deal of new and absorbing material, especially that relating to 'S. Chandrashekhar and the influence Ramanujan had on his life'. In his Foreword, Bruce Berndt states that the book 'significantly adds to our knowledge about Ramanujan'.

The work is 'an attempt to provide a brief introduction to the life and work . . of Ramanujan'. To this end, the book is divided into seven sections, or chapters, dealing with his life, glimpses of his mathematics, the famous Note-books, Hardy and Chandrasekhar on Ramanujan, the interestingly titled 'Books and Busts', and a comprehensive listing of the location of materials pertaining to Ramanujan's life.

The Biographical section is not the best feature of the book; perhaps the experience of reading Kanigel leads one to unreasonably high expectations. In any case, there is the usual information, dramatic enough, on the events and people in Ramanujan's life. Of some interest is the history of Janakiammal, his wife. That said, there is no question that the comments and experiences of the many people who met and were influenced by Ramanujan have been meticulously documented. This is particularly true of the Indians from this period.

It is the next section, titled "Ramanujan's Mathematics: Glimpses", that is also the best. Results from every period, usually of direct relevance to his most important work, is represented here. This balance comes as no surprise, for K. Srinivasa Rao is himself a mathematician of some distinction. The theorems inevitably leave one with the sense that 'not only are such results fascinating, but for the most part, Ramanujan's methods remain a mystery'. Some idea of this mystery can be had from a remarkably accurate formula for π:

$$\frac{1}{\pi} = 2\sqrt{2}\left\{\frac{1103}{99^2}+\frac{27493}{99^6}\cdot\frac{1}{2}\cdot\frac{1.3}{4^2}+\frac{53883}{99^{10}}\cdot\frac{1.3}{2.4}\cdot\frac{1.3.5.7}{4\cdot 8^2}+\cdots\right\}$$

While Rao's target here is the mathematically inclined, those with altogether different proclivities could read this section, to their benefit. The presentation is elementary and lucid, and an understanding of Ramanujan cannot be reached without some idea of his work; it is this work that stands to contradict the arrogant presumption that aesthetics, clarity, elegance and intuition are the realm of 'the arts and humanities'.

Ramanujan's Notebooks are, with Newton's 'Waste Book' and the diary of Gauss, among the most extraordinary set of documents in the history of mathematics. While the Notebooks are 'naturally unequal in quality', they are rich in ideas that have found their way into many practical and theoretical fields of thought. For the pure mathematician, Polya's reaction tells its own story.

"One day . . . Polya . . . borrowed from Hardy his copy of Ramanujan's notebooks. A couple of days later, Polya returned them almost in a state of panic explaining that however long he kept them, he would have to keep attempting to verify the formulae therein and never again would have time to establish another original result of his own."

The enormous task of editing the notebooks—proving the results or indicating where the proof might be found—was largely accomplished by Bruce C. Berndt; his task was completed only about a year ago. Prof. R.P. Agarwal's work on the notebooks also receives extensive attention.

The most important figure in the life of Srinivasa Ramanujan was Godfrey Harold Hardy. He gets his own chapter. I made the interesting discovery that the Hobbs class[2] of mathematicians was, in fact, only second best, for, "Bradman is a whole class above any batsman whoever lived; if Archimedes, Newton and Gauss remain in the Hobbs class, I have to admit the possibility of a class above them, which I find difficult to imagine. They had better be moved on from now into the Bradman class."

Further, a footnote says, A.E. Trott has an average of 102.50—but he only played in 5 innings. The 'Trott class' does not seem to have the same ring about it.

Once again, the significant parts in this section relate to the twelve Harvard lectures delivered by Hardy on Ramanujan, high in mathematical content. Valuable insights are gleaned from the recollections of Indian mathematicians. For instance, S.R. Ranganathan notes that Hardy's reaction to the notebooks was very similar to Polya's.

In "Chandra and Ramanujan", an address 'On Ramanujan', delivered at an International Conference held to mark Ramanujan's birth centenary is reproduced, and this also relates the story of the founding of the Ramanujan Institute. It also turns out that it was Chandrasekhar who was instrumental in recovering, from Janakiammal, the only authentic photograph of Ramanujan and sending it to Hardy. Chandrasekhar's correspondence in this regard is reproduced. The unnecessarily controversial account of Ramanujan's attempted suicide, in the recounting of which Chandrasekhar's motives were questioned, has been given. It was Chandra's feeling then that 'it should be published sometime'. Rao has reprinted the account, citing Janakiammal's death as his reason.

This book has been written as 'an introduction', but it is more than that; Srinivasa Rao has produced a complement to the biography by Kanigel. It serves as a reference point for deeper research by the layman into the life of the greatest formalist of this century, perhaps among the handful in the history of mathematics that deserve Gauss' title of *clarissimus*.

1 "Of the millions, how few get any education at all, how many live on the verge of starvation; of even those who get some education many have nothing to look forward to but a clerkship in some office on a pay that is usually far less than the unemployment dole in England. If life opened it's gates to them and offered them food and healthy conditions of living and education and opportunities of growth, how many among these millions would be eminent scientists, educationists, technicians, industrialists, writers and artists, helping to build a new India and new world!" (from *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru).

2 The highest accolade Hardy would give to a mathematician was in placing him in the Hobbs class, after the great English batsman Jack Hobbs.

Rishi Srinivasa Iyengar is a student of Mathematics.

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Towards a Professional Approach

Preeti Gill

CHILDREN'S FICTION IN INDIA: TRENDS AND MOTIFS

By Prema Srinivasan

TR Publications, 1998, pp.205, Rs.200.00

Children's literature is part of the larger panorama of world literature and it needs to be analyzed and promoted in much the same way. The range and diversity is immense and in India there has been a great deal of activity in this field. Over the years one has seen a number of books, authors and publishing houses do yeoman service to the cause of children's literature.

All of us grew up with favourite writers and authors, with favourite books, books that we still enjoy. These are not necessarily classics yet we still go back to them and recommend them to our own children. An enthralling tale told well moulds the imaginative and intellectual skills of the young reader more than toys and games.

The author is a well known name to readers of the *Hindu* and has written numerous articles on this special section of literature. As she writes in her Preface, this book contains a discussion of the important writers, the outstanding fiction produced and the publishing scene in the area of children's fiction written in English. There is a dearth of critical reference material on this subject as it is still not perceived as a separate area of study for a graduate or postgraduate course and the author too feels this lack.

Prema Srinivasan begins by discussing significant trends in children's literature both in India and abroad and feels that the general trend for writers is to deal with contemporary themes like environment preservation, scientific speculation and social concerns. This is true in India as well as more and more of our writers look to writers from the West, whether it is James Herriot and Gerald Durrell, or A.A. Milne for their animal/wildlife stories, or more contemporary writers like Libby Hawthorne and Roald Dahl. The ever-eroding geographical boundaries is leading to a certain globalization in the kind of books that children are enjoying across the world—there is a desire to share each other's experiences and a lot of them are common concerns to young people across nations.

Children today are no longer reading the classics recommended by their parents and their tastes have changed over a period of time. To chart this change the researcher has given a set of questions to be answered by child readers and she draws some very significant conclusions from her findings. These findings are extensively discussed at the end of the volume. Childhood as a period of pristine innocence has shrunk and children are venturing into hitherto forbidden thresholds much earlier. Writers of children's fiction should be able to perceive and use the prevailing situation to provide them with authentic and realistic portrayals of the problems confronting the young today.

Children are unrelenting and fierce critics as they are spontaneous in their praise. They cannot be fobbed off with clones of foreign authors and the usual masala mix of adventure stories, school stories, moral hectoring and traditional mythological tales as we have been dishing out to them in India. They are demanding more and we must recognize that they are dissatisfied with the stuff that is trundled out in the name of "children's literature". Why is it that so few children turn to Indian authors? We have outstanding writers like Ruskin Bond, R.K. Narayan and others who write for all of us, including the children in us. But how many of the children we know read them? One very important reason is that Indian writers of children's books focus on the tiny tot brigade, they do not address the older child, the young adult. Dr. Srinivasan feels that few of them talk of issues that concern the growing child confronted by doubts, hesitations and confusion. Often sophisticated beyond her/his years but without the emotional or intellectual balance to handle this sophistication, groups of readers are looking for answers, they are looking to identify.

Prema Srinivasan writes that teens seek their own routes towards adult fiction; Asimov, Buchanan, Jeffery Archer, Danielle Steele are popular with young readers. Indian teens also read much the same books and feel a lack of indigenously produced books that deal with sensitive subjects like premarital romance, drug abuse, gang warfare, rebelling against adult authority etc.. "We want to read about the boy or girl next door. We do not want to read stories about good children who get sweets if they study well, but stories about us, about the fears and anxieties that we suffer from". This is an extract from a letter by a young reader.

We have had some excellent tales told by expert craftsmen, superb wordsmiths like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai but these are few and far between.

Writing for children has been considered child's play but this is a misconception and it is such insensitivity that has resulted in the present dearth of good literature for children in this country—a failing that is decried at every seminar or conference organized around this subject including the recent IBBY Conference held in New Delhi last month. We need to do some serious soul searching.

It is essential to fill the colour of fantasy into the realism of today, of upgrading, as it were, folk literature and tales, to make them compulsive, enjoyable reading. In India we have a long tradition of oral tales, story telling was a much loved activity in all our shared remembrances of childhood. Written stories for children are a much more recent phenomenon, and the awareness to address the child reader as a separate target group is a concept borrowed from the West and came about only after Independence. It was only after the British came to India that books for children began to be regarded as an important part of literature.

The book gives a very useful historical reconstruct of early children's fiction in India as well as the premier institutions involved in the activity of commissioning books for children as well as promoting them like the National Book Trust, the National Council of Educational Research and Training, the Children's Book Trust etc. Describing the scene after the seventies Dr Srinivasan talks of other significant contributors to the field of children's literature both in terms of publishers and authors and here she reviews works by Ruskin Bond, Margaret Bhatty, Shashi Deshpande and others. Among the publishers Thompson Junior Library, Sterling, IBH, Ratnasagar were the first to give space to this fledgling genre followed by Rupa and Harper Collins, Penguin Books India, Orient Longman, and most recent entrant in India, the publishing giant Scholastic.

An important thing that emerges here is the observation that "children need at least two kinds of literature. They need books that portray people living the kind of life they lead themselves and they need to be taken into other worlds as different from their world as possible in order to stretch their imaginations or rather to keep their imaginations supple." And the "most significant formulaic artists are those who effectively resolve these problems in a way that balances the claims of escapism and the fulfillment of unconventional experience with the artistic interests of revitalized stereotypes, some degree of originality, and as much plausibility as the boundaries of the formula will permit".

Dealing with narrative patterns in two chapters Dr. Srinivasan focuses on themes and trends in much of the literature available to kids and she looks at books she considers as pathbreaking or influential in some way. Much of what she sees in India has been modelled on the West. The adventure category has been voted the most popular sub genre with the 10–15 age group and among the many books she takes up here what stands out as an exceptional piece of writing is *The Kaziranga Trail* by Arup Dutta which she says ushered in a new type of adventure tale, Indian in tone texture.

The scene in the nineties is more firmly established and the readership too has grown somewhat with aggressive marketing by publishers. And so we now have a host of new writers, Monisha Mukundan, Sigrun Srivastva, Bulbul Sharma, Indi Rana, Subhadra Sengupta among others. Two seemingly contradictory impulses are found in children's writing in India: the obsession with myth and a rich tradition of epics and also side by side with this a desire to experiment with form and content. Science fiction, historical fiction, biographies, realistic tales, school stories, animal stories which operate on many levels, picture books and comic strips are all different genres and the author devotes critical space to all.

The last chapter of the book explores possibilities for the future of the genre. Indian writers she feels on the whole prefer to take a non controversial stand on most issues but the modern trend of emphasizing self fulfillment as against old world values is more or less accepted now. Progressive views on race, gender, social class and personal psychology are preferred to traditional concepts. And a concern for wildlife and environment, form themes of a large body of contemporary writing for children today.

Smaller sub sections deal with book promotion programmes, the role of the adult mediary, the threat from visual media, the role of the teacher and also how to write for children. She concludes by saying that "this book has been conceived and written to improve the understanding of the reading needs of children in India, in the context of the diversity and quality that have emerged in children's writing today." We are all aware of the tremendous potential of children's literature and surely a serious study like this one augers well for the future of the book in this country.

Preeti Gill, formerly with The Book Review, *is a freelance critic.*

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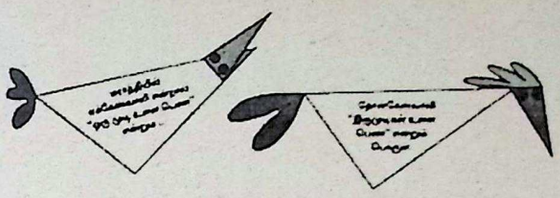

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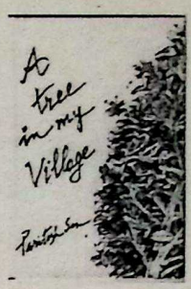

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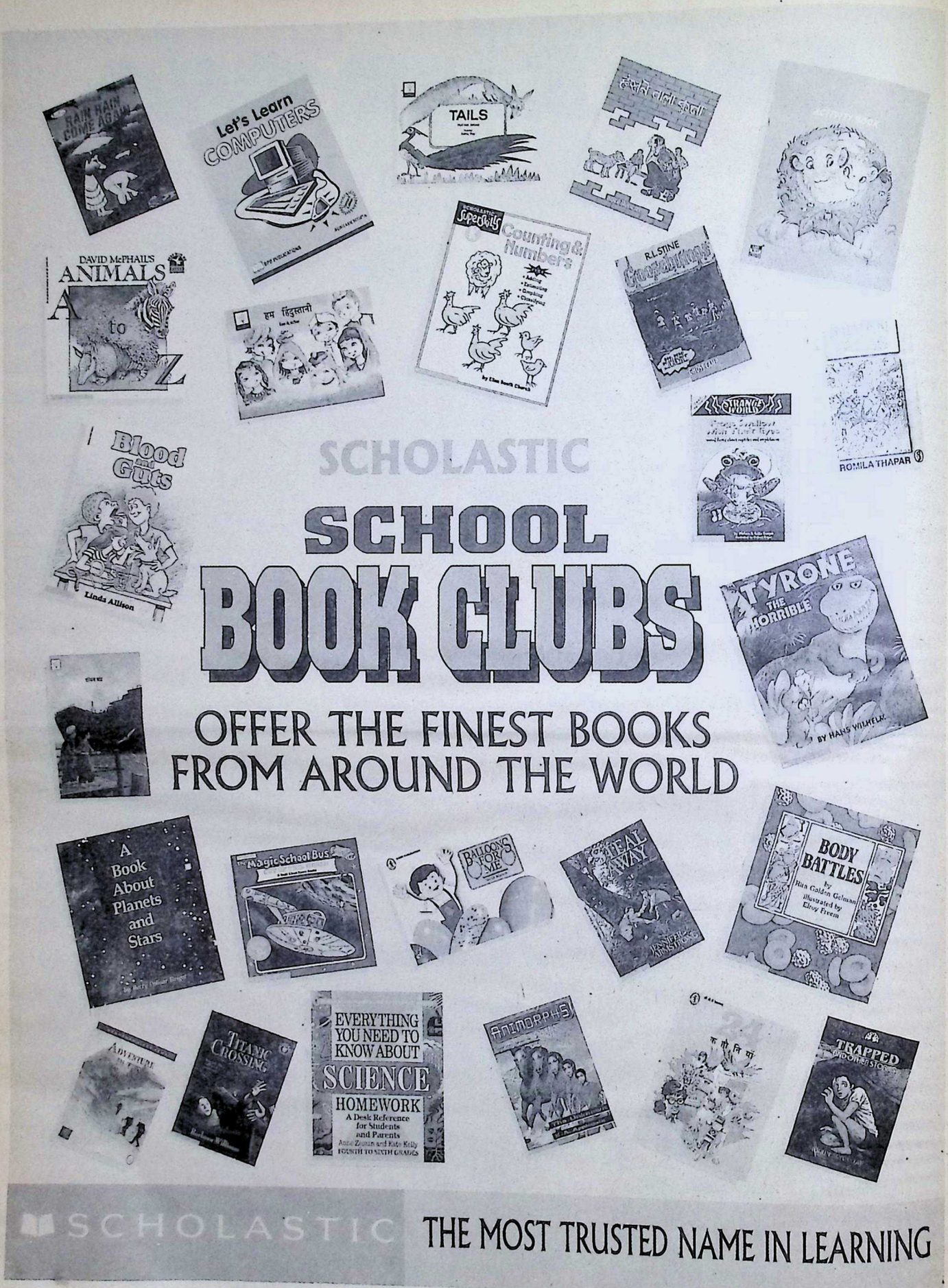

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No Requiem For Children's Writing, Please!

Shefali Ray

"Text book, yes. Adaptations, maybe. But fiction? Original writing! Sorry, no." That is the classic response that accosts a creative children's writer on the lookout for a publisher. For years, the text book has enjoyed the maximum visibility in India. By India, we, of course, do not mean only the metropolitan cities where children's literature, written and published abroad, is accessible in abundance and variety. It (the text book) continues to edge out Indian fiction for the young for multiple reasons.

Such a situation has come to pass that good publishing houses like Ratna Sagar and Puffins India have almost downed the shutters of their 'children's fiction counters'. Many publishing houses have shifted to the more economically viable project of text book publishing—one which promises a large clientele, provided the right kind of effort and contacts are forthcoming. Thus year after year newer and newer sets of text books keep arriving in the market, of varying quality and reliability.

There are still a few publishers like Vikas, Madhuban who are persisting with children's fiction, though they may candidly call it a bad bargain.

So the publisher says, 'children's story books by Indian authors do not sell'. Moreover, the bookseller would not stock them and even if he does so, would certainly not give them prime location on his bookshelves. Thus this leaves the creative children's writer with two options. One is to join the team of writers of a text book series and get lost in adaptations, exercises and activities and try to make the best of a job which in truth is a highly technical one, to be dealt with by educationists and experts. The other is to forget writing altogether.

Talking to booksellers revealed that parents still prefer the well-known foreign publications which to them are predictable in content and quality. These the bookseller displays aggressively for he must remain in business.

Another plea that is offered in justification for refusing to publish or stock Indian writers is that children do not read any more. Paro Anand, Editor, National Centre for Children's Literature, rightly comments that television has been much maligned as the 'big bad wolf' devouring children's leisure and interests. Interviews with educated parents, however revealed that children still read but they read what their parents and teachers suggest. Parents suggest time-tested literature only because it is familiar to them. The teacher often ends up suggesting books she herself grew up with, for she is unaware of the new breed of children's writers who have appeared on the literary scene.

Thus, as Ms. Anand feels, access and knowledge are of prime importance in this game of children's writing. Here the publisher and the school can play a pivotal role in enhancing visibility. It would be worth mentioning the Book Reading and Story Telling projects of the National Book Trust which have successfully taken books to the children especially to areas where the bookshop is a rarity. The strategy then is to initially circumvent the bookseller and talk directly to the parent clientele and the target group, the children. And, what better place to do it than the school where there is a captive audience. And, what better way to make the book visible, than to weave it into the school curriculum inn a hundred and one interesting ways.

The first responsibility in ensuring visibility of the book lies with the author who should keep in mind current interests of children and use a language that 'speaks with the child, and not one which 'talks to her.' Ritu Singh, a children's writer and reviewer feels that the language of much of children's writing is still very formal and at times overpoweringly didactic. Values are significant but should they be crystallized and placed as an appendage of the story? Could they not be woven in the 'warp and weft' of the narration instead of making them distinguishable as 'knots in a piece of faulty weaving'? As many teachers and children feel, humour has yet to find a significant place in children's writing in our country. Last but not the least, could the Indian writer emerge out of the chrysalis that holds him/her captive as a mere clone of his/her more established western counterpart? Life is multifarious, intensely exciting and challenging. Could we find such episodes from it that the Indian child can relate to, empathize with?

Next comes the publisher who could complement the good work done by an author through good art-work, sometimes conventional, sometimes stylized, good paper, good binding and an attractive packaging that propels both the child and the parent towards a book? Even the best of gems remains obscure if not shown the light of day. Book-reading sessions, story-telling sessions, 'meet the author' sessions, quizzes with prizes, campaigning and advertising would go a long way in popularizing a new book. Could we have the same kind of build up as we have for a promising book for adults? Can we offer it to the child and let her make her own decision? Probably such an effort around April or May just before the onset of vacations, in the opinion of Mr. Rupendra Kashyap, Som Sudha Prakashan, would increase awareness and visibility. This way, both children and parents, would know what new books are available for the young reader.

One can never discount the role of newspapers and magazines in popularizing children's books, through more dedicated space—whether for reviews, interviews, discussions or comments. *'Ananda Mela'* a literary supplement of *Ananda Bazaar Patrika* is doing yeoman service in bringing new books to children through its Puja Special wherein children can get ten books for the price of three. Later these books are published individually too. If anywhere, children's literature is doing well, it is in Bengal.

The school librarian has a significant part to play in bringing new books to the children. Not only rounds of book fairs and exhibitions and, purchasing the new and the ones which promise to be interesting but also inviting publishers to the school would help. Reading lists could be prepared and some interesting activities worked around these books.

Book Fairs and Book Melas for children should be organized by publishers in collaboration with schools where activities could be clubbed along with the pleasure of browsing and book buying. The effort should be to make the much neglected children's writer visible.

Let us not sing a requiem for Indian writing for children. Let us attempt to turn it into an ode in celebration of a genre meant for the young alone—one they can relate to—one they may cherish in times to come.

Shefali Ray is an educationist and children's writer based in New Delhi.

Peace Through Children's Books

Nita Berry

THERE'S ANOTHER WAY: STORIES OF PEACE, LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

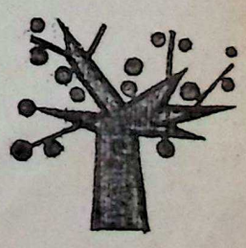
Edited by Deepa Agarwal. Illustrated by Tapas Guha

Madhuban Educational Books, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., pp. 103, 1998, Rs.35.00

It has permeated our lives everywhere—at home, in school, the street and even through the media. It glares down at us from road-side hoardings. It reveals its savage face over the small screen and the large. It freezes one's blood even through innocuous computer games. No—violence cannot he wished away for it has come to stay as a stark reality in our lives at every age. As a way of life and thought. Yet, is there no other way out of difficult situations or conflict?

That's just what *There's Another Way*, a collection of ten stories brought out by Madhuban Educational Books is all about. Written by AWIC members, these entertaining stories revolve around varying situations where problems in young lives could be resolved through either violent means, or amicably through 'peace, love and friendship'. When you opt for the latter, "the glow of forgiveness, sharing friendship... is definitely a much more pleasant and comfortable feeling than that of wanting to seek revenge" ("Red Says Stop").

What do you do when the bottom seems to fall out of your world? Your parents are suddenly not your own. You are an unwelcome stranger in your own house, an intruder—unloved, unwanted and rootless. How hateful everything appears. In "We Love You, Anjali", young Anjali is horrified to discover that she is adopted. "My mind



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froze for a moment—my real parents didn't want me. They had abandoned me. I started trembling with anger, hatred and bitterness" The discovery of a tiny abandoned baby puts things into perspective and brings about a change of heart, and happiness. Nilima Jha's sensitive story is told with deep sympathy and understanding of the plight of the mute and the insecure.

When social and religious prejudice permeate into children's lives and make their eyes spit fire when in reality "we are all children of one God", the end can be sad and meaningless. In "The Right Remedy" two bright and brave children set out to counter adult prejudices and murderous hatred in their own innovative way. It saves the day and the villages. This absorbing story by R.K. Murthi is enlivened by his humorous, pithy style.

Hari and Ravi in "Red Says Stop" sell newspapers at traffic light crossings. They take their cue from Hindi films to resolve their rivalries through heroic fights. After all, didn't their favourite hero from the latest blockbuster always "rub his enemy's face in the mud... and destroy him forever!". Fortunately, childhood feelings of friendship and forgiveness reassert themselves to make the end a happy one. In this action filled story, Nilima takes a dig at celluloid heroes who as role models have fostered much mindless violence in mundane lives.

"Bravo Deepak" centres around a very topical problem—campus violence much of which is supported by political parties. As Warden of Peace Deepak falls victim to gang violence and is brutally attacked. Should he quit as Warden of Peace to ensure his further safety, or work without disclosing names of the gang so that they continue their activities thinking he is afraid? His brother blinks back his tears. "We both knew the answer". This engrossing story by Thangamani, told through lively dialogue, depicts the seriousness of violence which has become the bane of campus life in our country.

Domestic strife has always been a reality in the lives of many hapless children, but was kept closely under wraps. It was never discussed openly in our conservative society, least of all in stories for the young. Today in the face of crumbling values, where broken marriages and single parent families are on the increase, many taboos in writing have been broken. Adults are no longer viewed as faultless role models, but may be even a source of embarrassment and resentment, as "A Walk in the Rain" by Deepa Agarwal shows. Nitin's pain finds a vent when he confides in Reshma Aunty during a walk through the puddles. A new canine friend lifts his spirits and suddenly his perspective on life changes, as new possibilities open up. This sensitive issue is brought out effectively through Deepa Agarwal's descriptive narrative.

A revolt in the jungle against Man? In "The War for Water" , a modern fable by Dilip Salwi, the animals are perturbed that there is only one source of drinking water left in the jungle, which means sure death. They have many grievances against humans who are "spreading like a cancer on the earth," and gear up for war. However, in the midst of the uproar emerges the voice of reason, the voice of peace. "There are always solutions if one desires peace! We've only to keep our eyes and ears open!" Supported by an ingenious idea from Cobra who suggests using the good offices of the termites known for their marvellous engineering skills in tapping underground water sources, peace prevails and war is averted. As with all Salwi's writing, there is much interesting information packed into this story.

Is it a woman's *kismet* to suffer unjustly at the hands of her husband? Domestic violence forms the theme again of Paro Anand's touching short story, "Babloo's Bhabi". "All hell broke loose. Suddenly the pitcher lay smashed on the ground with Bhabi lying among the pieces begging her husband for forgiveness. She clutched his feet as he rained blows on her and kicked her arms that stretched out pleadingly." Ultimately twelve-year old Babloo stands up to his brother to stop the ugly habit once and for all, and becomes a man.

How do you combat a bunch of pea shooting bullies who are hefty and seem afraid of nobody? Thirteen-year old Ravi is small for his age but surprisingly good at everything, thus inviting the envy of older, bigger bullies who tease him mercilessly. Thangam Krishnan's "Big is Not For Bullying" finds a happy solution to Ravi's predicament.

The heartbreak of domestic violence is the theme of "Dreams of Tomorrow" too. Manisha's parents constant quarrelling and banging "disturbed her bringing about a strange kind of despair." Always "reserved and strangely tongue tied, never smiling, a queer loner," she envies her classmates for their happy homes. The idea of living with Dada and Dadi in their tranquil little cottage gains ground. Ultimately she musters up courage to tell her parents that she wants to live life on her own terms. This becomes the turning point of her unhappy existence. Swapna Dutta writes with characteristic vigour and feeling in this moving story with vivid scenes.

There's violence of a different kind altogether in "Every Morning You Greet Me". " Not just people shooting at one another, murders, mob violence, neighbours and friends and family members coming to blows. But... trees being felled, grass being torn off, flowers, foliage, insects and animals massacred Chimneys puffing out smoke, pipes spilling out waste, children developing asthma and rashes, and wilting away like flowers themselves." Rohit is deeply concerned about man's exploitation of nature. He dislikes people like Mrs. Bose, Aunt Loveleen or even Pommy who hurt and maim plants. Only when Mrs. Bose lies hurt and helpless does she realize "what pain I have been inflicting throughout my life (on plants), heedlessly hurting them when they couldn't even cry for help or run away." Dipavali Debroy's sensitive story views nature as a living being, whom man has been exploiting shamelessly. This beautiful story stresses too the importance of environmental conservation.

This varied set of outstanding stories told by well known authors all carry an important message, the importance of peace, friendship and love. A little more humour in the stories would have been welcome for their issues are all uniformly serious. But then perhaps violence is no laughing matter!

The editor has been careful to preserve individual writing styles which adds to the spice of the collection. Good editing is enhanced by an attractive layout and typeface, although one feels the thick black line at the base of each page is unnecessary. A few printing errors could have been avoided. The illustrations leave much to be desired although the illustrator is a well known one. The figures, though generally expressive, are often gross and unappealing and do not usually match the sensitivity of the issues discussed. However, at Rs.35 this compact book is a bargain.

The release of this book in the year of the New Delhi IBBY Congress in September, the theme of which is *Peace Through Children's Books* is indeed apt. Ironically 1998 is also the year of the Pokhran nuclear tests. Whether these are seen as deterrents to violence or not, it is vital for our young that sanity and reason have the last word. *There's Another Way!* shows just how.

Nita Berry is a freelance journalist and author of children's books. Her book The Story of time *won the Shankar Gold Medal in 1995.*

Introduction to Hindu Culture

Pratibha Nath

THE HINDU CULTURE: A CLEAR AND CONCISE SUMMARY FOR YOUNGSTERS

By Mrinal Bali

Youngster Publications, Pune, 1997, pp. 77, price not mentioned

Writing a book on Hindu culture is a daunting task. So, for that matter, is reviewing a book on Hindu culture. The issue becomes all the more sensitive if the text is addressed to youngsters. Given the state of their minds, what would click with the youngsters today?

What caught my imagination was the blurb. 'Look around you', says the author. 'Observe nature. That's what our sages of yore did. That's what you do, and the basics of the Hindu culture will emerge simple and clear as fresh water.' The approach is commendable and the book, in parts at least, very practical and down-to-earth and therefore, very instructive.

But to begin at the beginning. The book starts by emphasizing the strengths of Hindu culture and the fact that it has survived, very creditably, a challenge from at least three other powerful religions, namely Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Using 'culture' almost as a synonym for religion, the writer asks, 'What is it in the Hindu culture that stands up rock solid to every challenge that comes its way?'

A pertinent question. As to the answer, one is invited to read and find out.

The table of the principal Hindu texts from which the book is said to derive is welcome. It enables the reader to see at a glance where, for instance, the Upanishads stand in relation to the Vedas and the Samhitas. From being simply names, they become part of a vast scheme of texts and religious tradition.

There is logic in what follows. A quote from the Rig Veda Samhita says:

'The enlightened sages first observe, then make a deep study of the secrets of God's creation. Then they repeatedly form their own versions, filled with new vigour and suited to the times' (p. 15).

Seeing that everything around them was changing ceaselessly, our sages realized that whatever their senses per-

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ceived was only what was apparent, not real. What, then, was real, constant,changeless? These sages were drawn by a quest for immortality, freedom from change, birth and death. Where did the quest lead them? How did they arrive at the concept of the real self? And having arrived at that concept, what means did they suggest for reaching the real self?

Here the book makes a sweeping statement: 'All matter, said the sages, is striving to go from ceaseless change to a state of no change—that is, to Brahman. By 'all matter' the sages meant literally all matter. Even rocks, said the sages, seek Brahman.' It goes further to cite the findings of Charles Darwin and Stephen Hawking in support of this view (p. 23).

And then, we are inevitably back to the issue that plagues all thinking men and women.

'If a man fails to attain Brahman before he casts off his body, he must again put on a body in the world of created things(*Katha Upanishad*) .

If that be the case, you must make a conscious effort 'to become immortal in Brahman. Achieve Brahman.'

The book then goes on to discuss ways of attaining Brahman (p.29). 'It is with your mind that you achieve Brahman. To reach your goal, you must first work on your body and mind. In other words, practise 'yoga'. Swami Prabhavananda, a noted sage, compared Yoga to seeing the bottom of a lake.

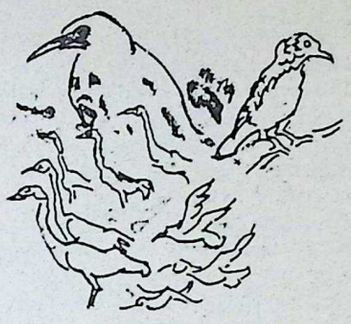
'If the surface of a lake is lashed into waves, or if the water is muddy, the bottom cannot be seen. The lake represents the mind, and the bottom of the lake, the Atman(Brahman).'

The various steps suggested by Yoga for attaining Brahman are dealt with in some detail. There is also a section devoted to 'the symbol of all possible sounds. . . Om Om is Brahman. Om is all. He who meditates on Om attains to Brahman' (*Taittriya Upanishad*).

Hence a word about 'dhyana' meaning concentration The chapter 'How to achieve Brahman' closes with the final step of Yoga,, that is 'samadhi' or prolonged 'dhyana'.

"Samadhi is when the mind remains in complete concentration, always detached from the senses, always steady, never changing. The yogi in samadhi has found the Atman, has found Brahman."

'Look around you', says the author. 'Observe nature. That's what our sages of yore did. That's what you do, and the basics of the Hindu culture will emerge simple and clear as fresh water.' The approach is commendable and in parts very practical and down-to-earth. . .



Section 4, Questions & Answers, seeks to resolve doubts pertaining to issues like the need for a 'guru', the pursuit of wealth, the caste system and vegetarianism. The Gayatri Mantra is given along with its interpretation, a detail sometimes missed out in books of this nature.

One does, however, wish that the verses relating to the status of women in Hindu culture had been less negative than 'One should not despise any woman. That is the rule' —*Chandogya Upanishad*. The author tries to prove that Hindu culture is attributed to the goddess Lakshmi and knowledge to the goddess Saraswati. But another verse, quoted from the *Brhad Upanishad* is highly derogatory to women (p.66).

According to this book, a happy, healthy balance should be struck between the material world and a life of renunciation till it is time for a person to devote himself entirely to spiritual pursuits.

'When will it be time for *you* to make a conscious effort for Brahman? When you too hear Om everywhere and see Brahman everywhere. Until you do, go play soccer. Develop a healthy body... Observe. . . Practise yoga. . ."(p. 58).

Sound advice, here as elsewhere in the book. All the same, the basics of Hindu culture do not always emerge simple and clear as fresh water. There are too many, sometimes heavy quotes to block the way. The text could have been lighter, interspersed with more explanations in the writer's own words. Here and there a story from the ancient texts would have been welcome. As it is, the book is totally focussed and therefore, too intense, at least for youngsters. It may be more in tune as an initial/refresher course for older people.

One last detail—Arjuna was the son of Pritha (Kunti), and not of Partha. Partha was his own name (p.46).

Pratibha Nath is a freelance journalist who contributes articles to newspapers and magazines. A one-time teacher of English, she has written many books for children.

Environmental Concerns

Dipavali Debroy

TYLTYL'S ADVENTURE

By Swapna Datta. Illustrations by Vicky Arya

1997, pp. 16, Rs. 6 .00

PATTERNS FROM NATURE

By Judhajit Sengupta

1997, pp. 12, Rs. 6.50

LIZARDS

By Indraneil Das and Romulus Whitaker.
Drawing, transparencies, photography by the authors

1997, pp. 32, Rs. 6.50

MAMA MOO ON A SWING

By Jujja and Tomas Wieslander. Illustrations by Sven Nordqvist

1997, pp. 24, Rs. 25.00

THE KING WHO PLAYED MARBLES

By H.C. Madan. Illustrations by Saibal Chatterjee

1996, pp. 30, Rs. 10.00

A PARCEL FOR THE POSTMASTER

By Dronvir Kohli. Translated by Shama Chowdhury.
Illustrations by Jagdish Joshi

1996, pp. 52, Rs. 14.50

All Nehru Bal Pustakalaya books, published by the National Book Trust, New Delhi.

In this Age of Information Technology, the child has information flung at him right from the start. Of late, some of it has consciously been about the environment. And that is a most welcome development in this age of nuclear explosions. Against this background, also welcome are the four titles, *Tyltyl's Adventure, Patterns from Nature, Lizards and Mamã Moo on A Swing*.

Patterns from Nature is a most innovative book, a cross between a 'picture book' and a 'work book'. Each page has a colourful background of forest and foliage, with an empty, white space in the middle, in the shape of a bird or animal. On the inner back cover, there are twelve rectangles of colourful patterns, marked with the names of the birds or animals to which they belong. The child is asked to choose the right pattern for each of the empty spaces, paint it in, and "see the difference it makes". A delightful way to teach the child that"there are patterns all around you—in plants, animals and things made by human beings. Patterns are not only beautiful, they are also useful. They might hide an animal from its enemies as the zebra's stripes do.. They might even send out a signal as a peacock's display does." Information when presented to me child must itself be camouflaged as entertainment, and this, the book does acknowledge, attempt and achieve. One only wishes that there had been at least one extra page for each of the birds and animals. Surely there are children who would like to see what would happen if the 'right' pattern was not chosen. How would a giraffe look coloured like the ladybird? What signals would a peacock send out, when striped like the zebra or spotted like the cheetah?

Tyltyl's Adventure is a most informative piece on sea-turtles, but look at the way this information is presented.

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Topsy is a sea-turtle who lived in the sea, but when it was time for her to lay her eggs, she swam back to the sandy shore and laid her eggs there. The book begins with Tyltyl, one of Topsy's babies, hatching and coming out of the sand. It describes how Tyltyl, along with her brothers and sisters, tries to reach the sea—which they instinctively feel to be their home. The child is informed about the provisions Nature makes for sea-turtles—such as worms inside sand heaps and water in puddles. Also the dangers she exposes them to—such as boys who dig up turtle-eggs, sea-gulls and sharks who feed upon baby turtles. But the information comes couched in simple yet graphic language and the most wonderful of illustrations on a background that is the colour of the sand. Vicky Arya has not merely illustrated this book; he has co-created it. The book contains more than information. As the baby turtles find they have to battle continuously for their survival, they are worried. Tyltyl looked around him anxiously. He didn't want any accidents. "Life seems to be jolly hard," said one of his brothers. "It seems to me that we are always hiding from killers of one kind or another!" "Life is an adventure, silly!" said Tyltyl. "We'll all get used to it in time. And enjoy it too. See if we don't."

The book *Mama Moo on a Swing* is really an Indian edition of a book—*Mamma Mu Gungar*—originally published by *Natur Och, Ockh Kultur*, Stockholm, in Swedish. However, it is a pity the translator's name is not stated. Though not as such informative, this book also deals with the world of birds and animals. The full-page illustrations are lively and the story may captivate the Indian child for the very reason that the Indian Go-Mata is, conceptually and really, so different from Mama Moo. And does the book also contain a message for the girl-child the world over? To quote Mama Moo, "Ho hum, ho hum, just because I am a cow doesn't mean I have to stand around chewing my cud and staring at nothing all the time?"

Lizards concentrates on providing information, and though it has many sketches and photographs, does not provide the information in an attractive fashion. Take, for example, the opening lines: "Lizards are the commonest of all living reptiles, and many different kinds live around us in India.. Most species are small. They are tree or ground-dwelling, with body temperatures that change according to the surroundings and none of them look after their young" (p. 3). A story like *Tyltyl's Adventure*, of course, in language and style suitable for older children, would have captured the interest better.

The other two books do not carry information, but messages.

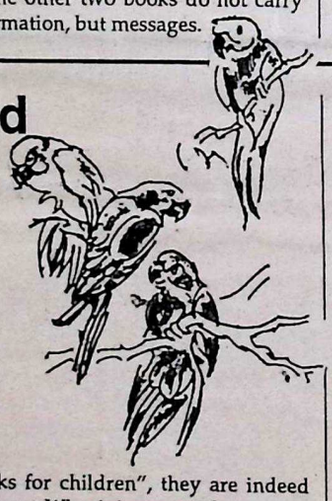
The King Who Played Marbles begins like the usual tale of kings and queens. Even when we are told that the young, orphaned prince, instead of learning statecraft, is playing marbles and building up the biggest ever collection of marbles, we are not too surprised. Princes of India in similar circumstances have often been found to be busy flying kites and sporting with pigeons. But we sit up when we find that the enemy camp also gets drawn into the game of marbles and clean forgets all about their aggressive intentions. Games and sports among countries are perhaps a promising way to world peace. They bring out the child in each one of us, and can help clear the environment of much pollution. The language is not equally easy-flowing everywhere, but the colourful illustrations make up for it, and the message is clear.

A Parcel For The Postmaster is set not in olden times, but goes back only a few years from now. In a valley in Himachal Pradesh, the postmaster is completely baffled to find a stone parcelled to him by a schoolboy from Delhi. Through the postman, the whole village comes to know and wonder. In the end, the boy from Delhi explains in a letter that he had picked up the stone from the valley and taken it to Delhi. There, however, he had the uncanny feeling that the stone to the postmaster, asking him to put it back where it belonged. Much could have been made of the supernatural element here. But instead, the book, aided by its delightful sketches, builds up the atmosphere of a remote village in the mountains, its post-office, its people and its natural beauty. The postmaster, who hailed from elsewhere, had stayed on at the village because he had fallen in love with it. He had blended with its environment. That is why he is the principal character of the book, the one to place the stone back, and convey the message that the environment must not be disturbed by man.

These NBT books cater to various age groups. While *Tyltyl's Adventure*, *Patterns from Nature*, and *Mamma Moo on a Swing* are for quite small children, the other three are for older children. But all of them are books that teach children to care for the environment in all its aspects.. Patterns in nature are being destroyed, the habitat of sea-turtles, lizards, cows as well as men, are getting endangered, river valleys are having their ecological balances disturbed. And the war game is going on. In such a world, books like the six above have a role to play. Do gift them to children you know, and before that, look into them yourself.

Dipavali Debroy is a freelance writer and contributes regularly to children's magazines.

Sharing Ideas and Experiences



Deeya Nayar, Radhika Menon and Sandhya Rao

Unknown words don't stop the child. But a boring story will." So said Isaac Bashevis Singer, and hit spot-on the epicenter of the debate on children's literature. What sort of books should be written for children? Are they reading enough? and the right books? Are the books themselves 'alright' (read 'politically correct')? How much should they cost? So much, just so much, has been analyzed and discussed on the subject. So obsessive have these questions become that quite often the wood is missed for the trees.

As publishers, these issues can't be ignored. As small-time publishers with a commitment to produce "quality books for children", they are indeed relevant. What is important however is to keep a balance.

Attitudes are of course born of personal experiences. We belong to a generation fed for a while—at a most impressionable phase—on an almost exclusive diet of Enid Blyton, what else?! More familiar with Kirrin Island, English boarding school life, birch trees and outdoor heather beds. Life around us probably didn't make for good stories and never really mattered—or so it would seem. Good books happened elsewhere, usually in England. It took a good bit of adult hindsight (and an actual taste of things) to figure out otherwise.

Which obviously inclined us to root for samosas and gulab jamuns when we got the chance. Translated into publishing language this means culturally relevant books, books within an Indian idiom. So that our children at least can grow up with a wholesome sense of identity with things Indian. Not in any overt I-Indian, my-India kind of way, but naturally. To be aware of their surroundings, their people, their country as it is today, not only their heritage. For to grow up strong in one's own culture surely gives one the confidence to accept others open-mindedly, neither too aggressive nor defensive. Enid Blyton is a wonderful writer, and books from other countries are important. They open out whole new worlds for us. But they have to co-exist with our own books. Supplement them, not override them like in the past.

Ours has in a sense been a generation reacting. An understandable post-colonial phenomenon and one which we seem to share with other colonized countries, such as those in Africa. A good thing too, for it has spawned a vast amount of ethnic literature for adults and children. "People need to find themselves in the books that they read," says Brigid Smith in *The Prose and the Passion: Children and Their Reading*. Regional language books have had this advantage, which is why our parents who grew up stronger in the vernacular than most of us have not faced this problem.

What has changed now is that English too has become as Indian a language as any other. And writing in English doesn't anymore mean having Jill and Sam as characters in an English countryside. Nor does it mean translating regional stories in correct, simple English—with a bland pan-Indian flavour that captures nothing of the local flavour which gives it its life. For there is no 'one type' of Indian, no definition. There are indeed many Indians, and Indians all, that make up India.

But all this is post analysis of what started off as pure gut-feeling at Tulika. One of the first experiments was *Ekki Dokki*—one of those timeless grandma's tales in Marathi, retold most unselfconsciously in English. No heavy claims in mind. Characters were wackily picturized as combinations of triangles. Marathi words were used where necessary, for they seemed natural. And no stuffy glossaries to put

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hildren off, or explanatory notes at the ottom of the page. We created the Wordbird, which streaked across the ge explaining unfamiliar words or eas. So we could now retain regional rds as we chose, and children could ld up an interesting new vocabuy in a most imaginative way. There a whole new generation who speak dian', with English as the springard, dipping into a rich melting-pot languages all the time... and everye understands.

Like Singer said, strange words don't tter. The story did. Parents told us w their children wouldn't sleep thout listening to Ekkesvali and onkesvali's adventure, and that was the proof we needed. Our nose had us on the right track! With so Indian ambience—the story, the colours, e pictures—the appreciation from reign publishers as well was quite couraging. A good book obviously sses all boundaries. But while they t the illustrations were wonderful, ey weren't Indian enough, they said. meaning, not quite like our miniature intings, with long-skirted long-ired damsels in veils? Another ange objection, that too from an orization specializing in multituralism, was the baldness of the o sisters. For Ekki (as per the story) just one hair, Dokki had one more. eir contention that it might be upsetg for children who have had chemoerapy for cancer, and therefore initive, quite knocked us over! Our planations—that the story was such, t Indian children didn't react so, that shaving the head was quite mmon in India—left them nconvinced. And enlightened us that en how we react to shaved or bald ads is so cultural!

Yes, one has to be sensitive to hurtg references to 'bald', 'fat' and 'ugly', pecially when they apply to already likable characters. That is our reponsibility, particularly as children's blishers. Yet political correctness is early an issue that has to be balanced, turally and in a lot of other ways We ve to have our own guidelines; there n be no rigid rules. Hazel Rochman mments in her book *Against Borders*, what she calls the 'PC debate':

"If there's one thing I've learnt in this whole multi-cultural debate, it's not to trust absolutes. I say something and then immediately qualify it with "And yet. . . ." And it's usually because I find a book that upsets all my neat categories. That's what good books do: they unsettle us, make us ask questions about what we thought as certain. They don't just reaffirm everything we already know."

Succinctly put, and probably rings uncomfortable bells for most publishers. We, at least, often tie ourselves in knots trying to sort out the most seemingly innocuous issues. Particularly, perhaps, with illustrations. Princess Surya, the Sun's daughter in the folktale *Eyes on the Peacock's Tail* (Under the Banyan series) a sweet, coy thing, waits garland in hand, swayamvara-style, to marry her proud peacock—and has us all up in arms! We want a 'normal' girl for princess, with some of her father's fire in her. All princesses surely are not, cannot, and should not be shown to be shrinking violets. Some stereotypes have to be challenged, we were certain of that. And the artist had to rework her into the mind-of-her-own thing she is now.

Then there were the 'fairies' in *Magic Vessels* (a Tamilnadu folktale, also from Under the Banyan). They were first converted into 'tree-spirits' (after a lot of brainstorming for the right word) for fairies had too many connotations of fair and delicate little waifs with wings — too female, also too foreign. We felt they should be darker for one thing, and unisex. That was the easy bit! What followed was heated discussions on how they should be dressed, or undressed. To dress them would give them a sex — we couldn't very well have them in unisex shorts and t-shirts. There were shocked responses at our suggestion that the 'more female' of the spirits should be as barebodied as the others! But we stuck to our instinct, and a compromise arrived at which worked out fine, going by the feedback we've had. It can be done!

Illustrations are so important in children's books. The problem is that good pictures cost money. Picture books, meant to facilitate reading, especially lose their point if not reproduced attractively. Good paper, printing, processes, low print-runs (as with most small publishers) all add to the cost of a book. Besides it would be unfair to undervalue the work of illustrators, writers and translators. Bad enough that quality publishers constantly fight the market in prices, it is doubly disheartening when otherwise 'enlightened' people tell us to "keep the price between ten and fifteen rupees". How can quality books be sold cheap? Are handcrafted things not more expensive than mass-produced ones? It is quite unfortunate that even those in the comfortable-income group, who would buy ice-creams for their children at the drop of a hat, complain about the price of a book that would last them so much longer than those ice-creams ... not to compare the value. Nor to undermine the pleasure of eating an ice-cream!

One certainly wishes that books could be made less expensive all round. That children's books apart, even *A Suitable Boy* or *God of Small Things* could be bought at two hundred rupees. But given all inputs that boils down to wishful thinking. Each book has a price which should not be undervalued. Where possible, we have indeed reduced prices. For instance, when *Sorry, Best Friend* was sponsored by *Frontline* magazine, Chennai, it reflected immediately in the cost of the book which dipped from Rs. 72 to Rs. 30—on hindsight a bit underpriced, for we now face problems with the re-print.

We have even been advised by the most well-meaning people to print our language books on cheaper paper. Why? Are children who choose to read in a regional language not entitled to the same quality? If we don't make our language books as attractive and well-produced as the English ones we will be defeating the very purpose of publishing in languages. The explanation that they might otherwise be inaccessible to a lot of people is only a limited side of the picture. Strangely, costs of imported books don't seem to bother most people—a black and white teacher's resource book is priced at Rs.200 while a four-colour profusely illustrated Hindi book with the same specifications at Rs.135 is considered exorbitant. Is it because they are the only ones deemed to be of value?

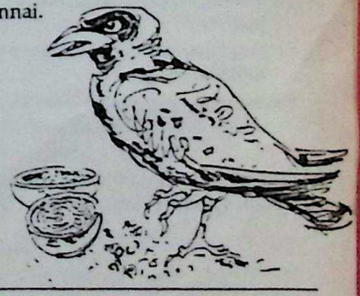
The mental block with language books continues with a lot of bookshops. "Don't give us vernacular books," they say quite openly. This, when we are trying to encourage children into reading more in languages, with books as attractive as those in English. These same shops are also happy to display foreign brand-name books in their special stands, but claim to have no space for ours. But luckily, the future is not completely grey. There has been a noticeable change for the positive in the last couple of years, and there are the sympathetic ones who are very supportive.

The tide seems to turning, too, with the media. Where children's books were usually dismissed in two sentences for reviews — that is when they were reviewed at all, not dumped! — there is a growing consciousness of them as at least worth a little more detail, at least sometimes. Children's publishing in India is yet to come of age, and the bottom line is that we need the support we can get. But we are inching there, and on our own terms. What we still need is a strong marketing strategy overall, which catches the attention of and reaches books to the maximum number of people, within India and overseas.

With this in mind Tulika launched its very own website on internet (which, incidentally, did us proud by winning an award for design!), so our books were accessible anywhere in the world. It is particularly important for there to be a flow of books from east to west. Only then can stereotypes of the so-called oriental be perceived as only that — not the reality. *And Land Was Born*, for example, is an intriguing little-known tribal tale of creation from Central India, for which the illustrator painstakingly researched paintings Bhilalas do on mud-walls of their homes. What emerged was a wonderful blend of her talent and imagination, rooted in tradition. Yet while the book was much praised by publishers abroad, it was considered "too culturally removed" for western children (in fact we have often been surprised at the resistance to such books in India as well). The pictures were wonderful, they said — read 'exotic', as they should be, coming from the land of elephants and snake-charmers — but the story too "foreign". As foreign to those children as gnomes, fairies and witches are to ours. But ours have absorbed these ideas and been the richer for it.

The truth is that these distinctions and debates are adult creations. Children are children the world over — curious, accepting, and very discerning in their own way. While we ponder and pontificate over the hows, whys and whats of reading, they read, making their own judgements. And as long as we ensure that they want to read, and enjoy what they read we believe we are on the right track.

Deeya Nayar, Sandhya Rao, Radhika Menon are editors at Tulika Publishers, Chennai.



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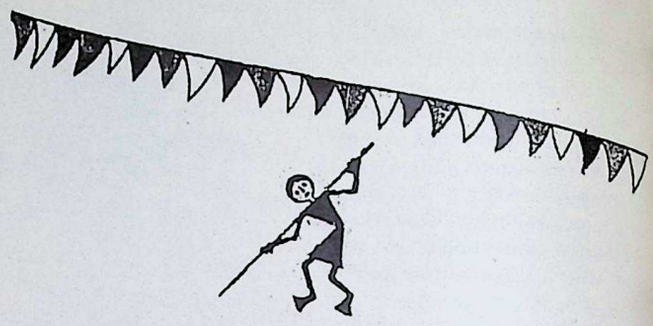
CBT for Children 1997-98



Meenakshi Bharat

The posy of six books offered by the Children's Book Trust, on the eve of the IBBY (International Board of Books for the Young) conference held in Delhi in October makes one sit up in the hope that there is some exceptional fare that is being laid out. The timing turns their appearance into an invitation for an earnest evaluation of the scenario of children's books being published in India today.

The two slim books of verse for little children in Hindi *Mooncche Tane Pahunche Thane* (1997) and *Chandamama Ka Pajama* (1998) are indiscriminate collections with no apparent guiding, cohering editorial principle. The pedestrian quality of the verse is highlighted by the trite subjects which are treated in both: rail, sunlight (both in winters and summers), gardens, trees, flowers, birds, toys—as if these are the only topics around which verse for children can be written. Yet, despite hackneyed inclusions like 'Apna Ghar,' out of the two books *Chandamama Ka Pajama* manages to achieve some success. For instance, the oft-repeated Diwali and Holi themes for children are set aside for a charming change in a little poem on *Id*, 'Id Ka Chaand.' It is worth noting that even though the same illustrator, Ajanta Guhathakurta is associated with the two books, *Chandamama* has drawn better work from her chiefly because the text has more possibilities. The best of the collection are the verses that have a 'story' element. Renu Chauhan's pen is able to successfully create some magic for the little ear. The title poem is a minor gem, bubbling with humour, and buoyed by the sense of wonder; packed with information, ultimately making an entertaining narrative. Similarly, this brilliant tie-up 'Chhoti Macchli' and 'Mendhak ki Baraat'.

Dinika Visits Grandpa's Farm (1997) is a slight book replicating the 'Old MacDonald had a farm' idea of taking the listener or reader on a conducted tour of a farm. The verse is forgettable; in fact, quite often, clumsy. The pastel illustrations by Jagdish Joshi are not memorable enough to either excite the little one, or to save the book. Poor designing and just passable illustrations for an otherwise well written book take some toll of Santhini Govindan's *A Present for Mrs. Kangaroo's Pouch* (1997). Nonetheless, the story that had been given a prize in the Picture Book Category in the Competition for Writers for Children, is engaging, packed with interesting information about how different animals mother their little ones and carry them around. In the same manner, *Christopher the Pilot* (1998) by Ravina Gandhi, a pleasing little story about a child's ambition to fly like his pilot father, is let down by unimaginative illustrations which lack finesse.

For the older child looking for thrills, Mitra Phukan's The *Biratpur Adventure* (1997) follows the path already chalked out by the established master of the genre, Arup Kumar Dutta, in placing them unmistakably in the Assam jungles. Ably set in *magh bihu* land, complete with *mekhala-sador*; interesting information about the native flora and fauna; and tracing migratory patterns of birds in marshes a buzz with mosquitoes and infested with leeches, the narrative has the necessary twists and turns of an adventure tale. This book, awarded the Second Prize in the General Fiction Category in the competition for Writers of Children's Books by the Children's Book Trust, harks back to superstitious beliefs about the lost souls of Biratpur and the historical background of the lost city to reinforce local colour.

The primary emphasis on the plot results in a gloss over the serious issues that are only hinted in the narrative: the differences of class, the rising pertinence of the contemporary context of separatism, gender stereotyping. The final inclusion of Munu, the poor village boy into the forest official's family from Guwahati and a stray attempt to overturn gender stereotypes with the mention of the girls rowing better than the boys, warrant more than the passing attention give them. The attempts to individualize the four child protagonists by the attribution of idiosyncratic differences like love for food or books are minimal and therefore inadequate. The book achieves some measure of success in the evocation of mood by apt comparisons in keeping with the setting ('watching [the knife] hypnotically, much like a small snake looks at the large mongoose'). In this 'all's-well-that-ends-well' story, peopled by stereotypical good, kind-hearted, selfless policemen and evil, harsh, cruel villains, the suspense is quite competently maintained.

From Atom to Nano-Tech (1977) is a collection largely made from entries in the category Popular Science in the Competition for Writers of Children's Books organized by Children's Book Trust. In the context of boring staid science texts, the effort though commendable is not enough. Some chapters which begin dramatically and creatively like 'Earthquakes', and 'Autobiography of an Atom,' manage to make some impact. Highlighted by a series of interesting facts, the message of the chapters is communicated amply through the simple clear language. But the effect of the book is not even because some of the essays, still pushed by the textbook impulse, are too staidly and boringly phrased and constructed. Moreover, if names of essayists are given in the contents, they should be allowed the respect of appearing at the top of the essay. The illustrations, though apt, have nothing original to add to the subject.

In the final analysis, these books, though beautifully printed, well produced and quite accessibly priced, do not completely satisfy the concerned and discerning reader because they are a rather average, mixed bag. The promise of stray, tardy sparks of talent is not fulfilled. The lack of that final glimmer makes the books a reminder that it is time to seriously take stock of the situation of children's literature today. The need of the hour is to recognize the child reader with respect by committedly producing literature where the writer, illustrator, and publisher all join hands in creating works that can becoming a shaping constituent of childhood memories.

Meenakshi Bharat teaches in the Department of English, Sri Venkateswara College.

Capricorn's Accusation

Capricorn,
The goat with a horn
And I have sworn,
That this sign will,
Never ever be torn.
Gemini, Cancer and Aries the Ram,
Cause quite a lot of scams.
Scorpio, Libra and Virgo,
So slow are your brains,
O' so slow.
Sagittarius, Aquarius and Taurus the bull,
So cheap you are you're gabs are so full.
Pisces, only you are left and I think you're the culprit of the theft!!!!

Dhruv Saran, Class VII, The Shriram School, Vasant Vihar.

Oh No, Its Pool Time!! (29-9-98)

Dark inky waters,
Wretched green tiles
The pool extends for miles and miles and miles.

Sharks lurking here and there,
Leeches swallowing things everywhere,
Its all so horrifying, it'll make you stare.

Huge horrifying diving boards
Big waves churning around.
Ripples whisper in a ghastly sound.

Terrified screams of people drowning,
Help Mr. and Mrs. Browning,
You can see the water frowning.

Stinky, stenchy changing rooms
Filled with chlorine,
Careful with the kids (if it goes into their eyes, they'll scream).

Horrid, horrid gulpers,
Sickening, sickening screams,
Jet black waters that throw away the sun beams.

Its a nice sunny day
But I still look glum, guess why?
ITS POOL TIME TODAY !!!

Dhruv Saran, Class VII, The Shriram School, Vasant Vihar.

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He Also Made Films!

Indrani Majumdar

The name of Satyajit Ray, to most people, would evoke only one image: that of a man peering through a camera, a look of rapt attention on his face. Few people outside Bengal know,even today, that for almost twelve hours on most days, he sat in his study, his feet propped up, a writing pad on his knees—writing stories, drawing pictures, forming limericks. When he revived the children's magazine, *Sandesh*, in 1961, he opened the door to a whole new world to the children of Bengal. It was Satyajit Ray, the writer they came to know and love. That he was a renowned film-maker was something the young readers of *Sandesh* did not know, and—at that time—did not much care about.

The strangest thing is that Ray began writing not by choice, but by chance. *Sandesh* was founded by his grandfather, Upendrakishore Raychoudhury, in 1913. Upendrakishore was among the pioneers of children's fiction in Bengal, who raised it to a height that remains unparalleled. Upendrakishore left his legacy to his son, Sukumar, whose talents ran in a different channel. What surfaced in all that he did was his sense of the absurd. *Sandesh* was nurtured by Sukumar until his untimely death in 1923, at the age of 36. After a couple of years, *Sandesh* ceased to be published.

However, it would be wrong to imagine that Ray was a stranger to the world of printing and publishing. He began his career as an advertising man, creating very original and oriental campaigns, writing in-depth film criticism and designing striking book jackets for Signet Press.

It was in the pages of this magazine that the two best known characters in modern Bengali juvenile literature were born: Professor Trilokeshwar Shonku, the scientist and Prodosh C. Mitter (*Feluda*), the detective. But that was not all. Ray went on to write innumerable short stories, novellas, poems and limericks, essays, puzzles, brain-teasers and crosswords. He also proved to be a gifted translator, translating English into Bengali and vice versa with equal ease.

For me and all the other children I knew, those were the years of growing up, of being curious, and wanting to read more and more. There were plenty of other good writers that we enjoyed reading. But each of us wanted to pounce upon everything that Ray produced. Why did this happen? Was it the novelty of his plots? His characters? Or was it just his language?

It seems to me that more than anything else, it was in the warmth, simplicity, and lucidity of his language that the chief magic of his writing lay. He knew that he was writing for children, but there was never any attempt to over-simplify or to talk down to them.

Added to this were his curious characters. They are totally unique. Professor Trilokeshwar Shonku, an affable old scientist, who lives quietly in Giridih with his old servant and a cat called Newton. But he has an ability to rock international science circles with his astounding inventions. One of them is a pill called 'Miracurol' which can cure any ailment. The other is a weapon called 'Anahilin' which makes an adversary simply vanish into thin air.

Feluda, the best known among Satyajit Ray's characters, is an eagle-eyed sleuth whose wit and intelligence is enough to subdue even the cleverest of criminals. Topshe(his young cousin who acts as his Watson and chief narrator) and Jatayu (a friend who happens to be the writer of best-selling pot-boilers) also come alive in their own way.

The short stories in their content, have a quaint, old world charm which reflects Ray's boyhood fascination with Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle. Professor Shonku, in the author's own words, is "a mild mannered version of Professor Challenger". Unlike his films, his stories do not remain confined to the Bengali milieu. They wander from Calcutta to London to the Sahara to Tokyo and to the uncharted Thokchun Gompa in Tibet.

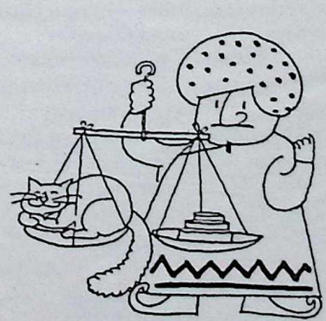
While his films deal with down to earth simple characters, his stories are peopled with weird monsters, pre-historic creatures, malicious and powerful toys, carnivorous plants, laughing dogs, talking crows.

Then there is a sceptic who slaughters a tame king cobra, only to turn into a cobra himself. The easy routine of another man's life is disrupted by the arrival of an identical 'double', leading to complete disaster. A lonely man's life is dramatically changed when he finds a strange bird with a big bill. A ventriloquist's dummy suddenly turns out to have a life and will of its own. A hunter of ghosts falls prey to the very powers he is trying to seek. Rather remarkably, most of these stories have a recurring motif: that of a bachelor, who lives alone with only a servant for company.

Consciously or otherwise, the film-maker in Ray comes through virtually in every story, in the way he packs in a wealth of details, and sneaks in information in just a few succinct words. Never, even as a small child, did I ever have to consult a dictionary while reading Ray's stories. All difficult words, facts or concepts were explained beautifully by the author himself. This is particularly true of the Feluda stories. Who knew that so many ordinary, colloquial Bengali expressions had their origins in Urdu, Arabic or Persian words, or that a simple word like 'terracotta' was really a mixture of a Latin and an Italian word? Also, who knew that there's a fascinating book in Sanskrit on riddles and puzzles titled *Bidagdhamukhanandanam*.

Between 1961 and 1992, Ray wrote 35 Feluda stories, 40 accounts of Shonku's escapades, and nearly a hundred short stories—in addition to numerous poems and limericks. These staggering statistics alone are an indication of the enormity of his success as a writer. However, he did not stop here. Unlike other writers, he embellished each story with eye-catching illustrations. Even the jackets of his books were designed by him. His love of words and passion for puns came thorough in the imaginative titles he chose for his collections of stories, each of which had a dozen tales e.g. *Ek Dojan Goppo* (One Dozen Stories, *Aro Ek Dojan* (Another Dozen), *Ebaro Baro* (Another Twelve), *Aro Baro* (Twelve Again), *Aker Pithe Dui* (One Against Two), *Bah! Baro (Bravo!* Twelve), and *Jobor Baro* (Terrific Twelve)

Now when I look back on the years since 1961, I am frequently reminded of the day when I learnt that the same man whose name appeared so often in the pages of *Sandesh*, was going to make a film for children called *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*. "But he only writes stories for us, and draws pictures!" I exclaimed, much taken aback. "Can he also make films?" My sister, who was my informant, sniggered at my ignorance. But even after all these years, I still think that at the age of eight, it was a perfectly valid comment to make.



Indrani Majumdar writes for children.

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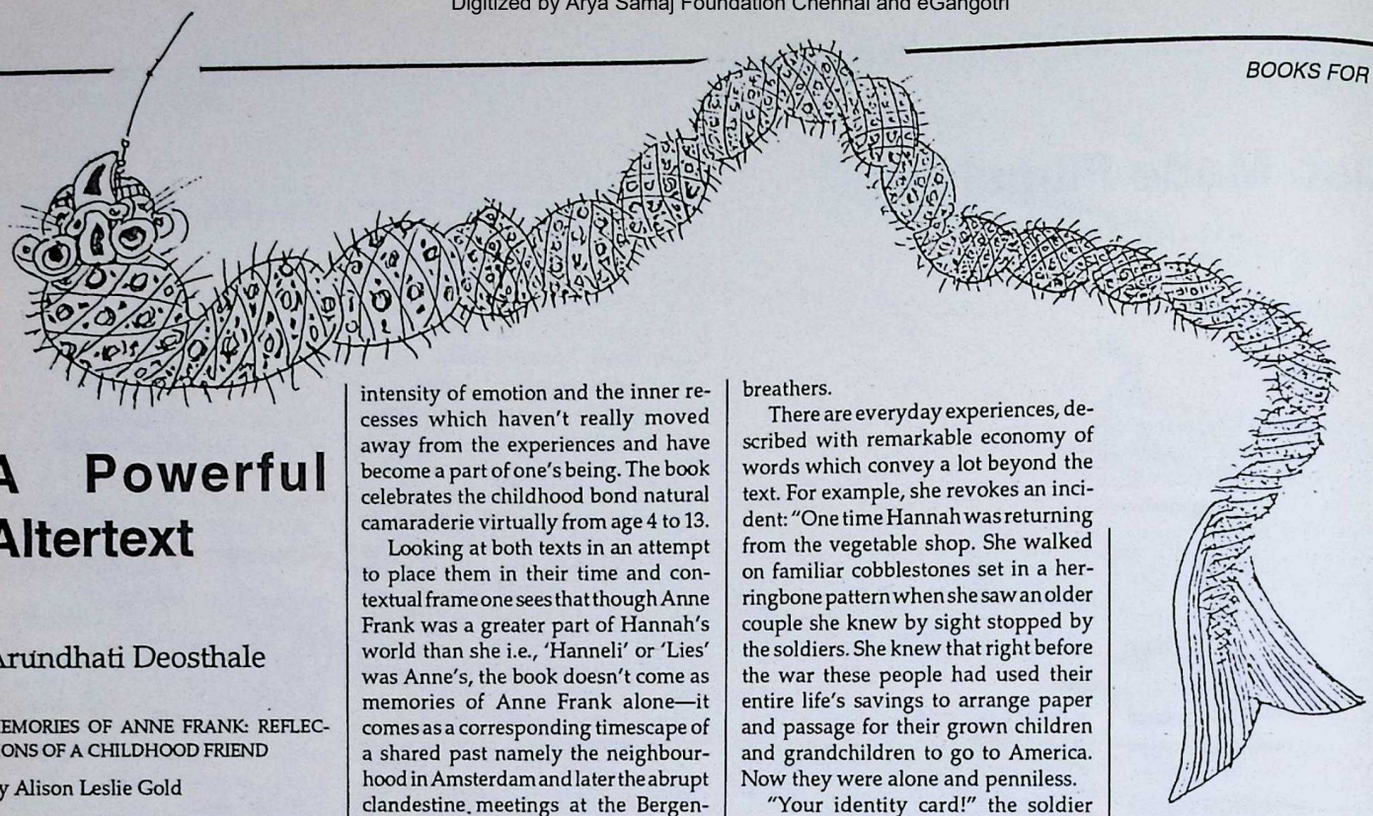

A Powerful Altertext

Arundhati Deosthale

MEMORIES OF ANNE FRANK: REFLECTIONS OF A CHILDHOOD FRIEND

By Alison Leslie Gold

Scholastic, USA, 1997, pp. 136, price not mentioned.

In an escape bid from oppressive Nazi rule in Germany during World War II, Otto Frank, Anne Frank's father moved to Amsterdam with his family in 1933. Unfortunately, the Nazis invaded Holland in 1940, raiding the Jew refugee annexies and subjecting them to all sorts of brutalities. Anne Frank's diary written between 1942-44 was the single most poignant account of life to emerge from the war after its first publication in 1947, to become a modern classic the world over. Her hidden world in the annex though eclipsed by murkiness of terror, insecurity and deprivation was not unremittingly bleak. Anne and her fellow annexers would try to cope with their shared plight giving hope and help to each other. Shortly before her birthday, Anne died of typhus at Bergen-Belsen camp and her diary abruptly ends there. And the rest of course, is history.

Memories of Anne Frank, published half a century later in 1997, tells a story of survival and despite its modest claims comes as a powerful altertext and an extension of Anne Frank's story. *Memories of Anne Frank* related by Alison Leslie Gold in the form of reflections of Anne's oldest childhood friend Hannah-Pick-Goslar, has the advantage of a mature retrospective view recounting an unforgettable patch of one's life-history. It may not have the urgency of *Diary of Anne Frank* which certainly overscores, having come first and being closer to the period it related to, but nowhere does one find Hannah's memories of Anne Frank wanting in intensity of emotion and the inner recesses which haven't really moved away from the experiences and have become a part of one's being. The book celebrates the childhood bond natural camaraderie virtually from age 4 to 13.

Looking at both texts in an attempt to place them in their time and contextual frame one sees that though Anne Frank was a greater part of Hannah's world than she i.e., 'Hanneli' or 'Lies' was Anne's, the book doesn't come as memories of Anne Frank alone—it comes as a corresponding timescape of a shared past namely the neighbourhood in Amsterdam and later the abrupt clandestine meetings at the Bergen-Belsen camp. Also there is a certain degree of juxtaposition as is only natural between two teenagers relating to their times each in her own way. While Anne comes across as a typical adolescent, rebellious, lively and vocal of her maladjustments with the shroudings, Hannah is quiet, precocious and by her own admission 'fun loving but also quite religious'. May be her role as an elder sister who's frequently reminded of her responsibility towards the siblings while braving the threat to her own existence prevails over everything else.

The book opens with the morning of 7th July, 1942 and goes on to describe a typical day in Amsterdam's Jewish citizenry with the mandatory wearing of the Star of David for the Jews which Hannah felt proud to wear but knew that it made her conspicuous like a target at a shooting range. As the day progresses her mother's warning, "Take care Hanneli! The Germans are picking up Jews on the street and sending them God knows where" rings true. Hannah discovers that Anne and her family have disappeared all of a sudden and without a trace, presumably to migrate to Switzerland. 'It was impossible to hold back the flood of tears and sensation of panic' she notes, absorbing the painful shock with restraint. Parting with friends and the people one has known becomes habit. Her psyche had to brave many a scar but equally strong is her quiet resolve to fight the fear and uncertainty in her own way trying to be a good, responsible young adult especially after her mother's sudden death at childbirth. Alongside are the teenager peer group ice-cream binges and freak outs to look at 'cute-looking guys, Hanukkah celebrations and such other breathers.

There are everyday experiences, described with remarkable economy of words which convey a lot beyond the text. For example, she revokes an incident: "One time Hannah was returning from the vegetable shop. She walked on familiar cobblestones set in a herringbone pattern when she saw an older couple she knew by sight stopped by the soldiers. She knew that right before the war these people had used their entire life's savings to arrange paper and passage for their grown children and grandchildren to go to America. Now they were alone and penniless.

"Your identity card!" the soldier barked. People crossed the street or hurried off. What would the soldier do when he saw the "J" stamped inside their identity cards. Hannah felt her stomach clench as the couple was shoved towards an open truck. The soldier hit the old man when he didn't move fast enough. Hannah's feet were like cement blocks. Her heart pounded. Her face was white as flour; her knees were buckling. Hannah wished her family and all the Jews would run away while there was still time"

Hannah misses Anne in more than one way. At school, at teenage pranks, at sharing existential anxieties and in the stolen moments of sheer fun. She sees the number of children in her school getting less each passing day and her heart sinks every time she sees someone missing. Life just goes on getting tougher. If Amsterdam got bombed, the Jew couldn't as much as go to the public raid shelter. Entry to any public place was forbidden.

Moving to a mud-mosquito infested transit camp called Westebork in Eastern Holland with her younger sister Gabi and her grandmother, she has to play child-mother to both. Life seems to be an unending story of terror and tension and Hannah's survival kit comprises her own grit and the humaneness of a few people like Mrs. Abrahams around her. Hannah has to work as a toilet cleaner in an orphanage, meeting her father occasionally and drawing some emotional support from him. Near-starvation makes her weak and dizzy and then comes a battle against deadly diseases like jaundice, dehydration and typhus. Being driven on from one camp to the next becomes part of life.

In February 1945, Hannah gets an unbelievable flash of news that Anne has also been brought to the Bergen-Belsen camp. The two friends meet on the sly with a lot of trepidation and excitement inn their hearts, though on either side of the wall, unable to see each other. Hannah gets to know of the failed escape bid of Anne's family. The girls share as much as they can in the next two or three similar brief meetings which follow. This dramatic reunion also includes a touching encounter. On hearing of Anne's starvation Hannah somehow manages to scrounge a few scraps of food and throws the package across the wall but as luck would have it, it falls in the hands of another starving woman who grabs it and runs away with it. And the next attempt has to wait for a few more days when they ultimately succeed.

Anne and Hannah have to part again as abruptly as they had met. Hannah has to leave Bergen-Belsen to move on to the next camp. Then comes a gloomy spell of hardships and a spate of illnesses. Ironically enough, its again at the hospital where joy re-enters Hannah's life. The war ends. Anne's father visits her, bringing her bad news. Anne and her sister Margot are dead. Otto Frank later almost becomes a surrogate father to Hannah and her sister.

Hannah, after migrating to Switzerland, catches up with life, lives till a ripe age to write her story with a hope that "perhaps this book will add to the knowledge of Anne Frank, will fill in what really happened—as horrible as it was—to my friend after the diary ends."

Arundhati Deosthale is in publishing.

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Neglected Flowers

Anupa Lal

SUM
Dipavali Debroy
ldren's Book Trust, 1997, pp.------, Rs. 30.00

'Always mind your own business, "said Mummy, "especially if there is something wrong, as there seems to be," But minding her own business was just what Arushi didn't do. . .'

This, more or less, could have been the start to any number of children's books in which a spirited youngster goes on to solve a mystery, nab a thief, discover hidden treasure, rescue someone in distress etc., etc..

Arushi does one of these things. But the book in which she features, *Kusum*, written by Dipavali Debroy and published by Children's Book Trust is not the usual, run-of-the-mill adventure story for children. What sets it apart is its sincerity, its ability to face uncomfortable social realities and offer credible solutions.

Arushi and Kusum become friends in Durdwan, where Arushi is spending the summer holidays. Kusum accompanies Arushi and her mother when they return to Delhi, as a prospective maid for the Guptas, Arushi's neighbours.

The Guptas, a middle class family like Arushi's, are looking for a young girl, about 12 or 13, to do all their housework. She should preferably be from a small town, not know anyone in Delhi(so that she is in effect, entirely dependent on them), and be content with a couple of hundred rupees a month as salary.

Kusum's family is very poor, her father is unemployed and they need the money Kusum could earn, working for the Guptas.

It is Arushi's idea to take Kusum back to Delhi. In her enthusiasm and ignorance, she does not realize that social pressures will not let the two girls remain friends.

Kusum is more worldly wise. At her very first meal in Arushi's house, she stays away from the dining table, despite Arushi's calling her, and only sits down to eat on the floor in the kitchen, when Arushi and her parents have eaten. Through many such little incidents, Dipavali Debroy anchors the story in reality.

Kusum begins work for the Guptas a day after reaching Delhi. As the months pass, a bewildered Arushi witnesses her friend's growing unhappiness and her exploitation at the hands of the Guptas. But no one, other than Arushi, seems to care. Her parents instruct her not to poke her nose into other people's affairs, not to get involved. How can Kusum be her friend, when there is a world of difference between the lives of the two girls?

What happens then, how Arushi finally manages to 'rescue' Kusum, how the problems of Kusum's family are resolved—make for absorbing reading.

Embedded in the story of *Kusum* are social issues that would be unwise and short-sighted of us to ignore. As Arushi's father says to Kusum's father at the end of the story:

"The whole thing is wrong. People like the Guptas, wanting to keep children as domestic servants; people like us, getting them such children to work; and people like you, letting your children go out to work—all of us are responsible. All of us are party to the same offence, depriving a child of its rights. We are all responsible for the present state of affairs."

There may be laws in India on child labour, framed as early as 1933, but they apply to organized and large-scale labour. Lakhs of children in domestic service like Kusum cannot benefit from them.

Kusum is poor, she is a child and she is a girl. Tragically in India today, there is scope for exploitation on all three counts.

Arushi's mother disapproves of Kusum's wearing frocks, however long, in Delhi and even within the house, in front of Mr. Gupta. Where then is the child safe?

If this book has one major fault, it is the flat, lacklustre style of narration. A vibrant, individual style need not be sacrificed at the altar of simplicity in a book for children. The two can co-exist. There are passages which have both feeling and rhythm:

"Her voice broke. "She is a good girl, our Kusum. Always a smile on her face. Never answers back, however much you scold. Never says 'I can't, whatever you ask her to do. Yet such is her luck..."She wiped her eyes on her sari. "Year after year she has gone without any new clothes, day after day she has gone hungry."

But such passage are rare. The illustrations by Subir Roy are also lacklustre and do nothing to enhance the text. It is shameful that the right amount of inspiration and effort hardly ever goes into the production of children's books in India.

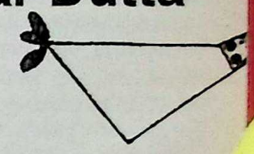
But perhaps it is unrealistic to expect anything else when children themselves, both socially advantaged and disadvantaged, are more the step-children of Indian society. They may have civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that are internationally recognized. But these rights are by and large, only on paper.

We deny our children their rights in many different ways. As we continue to pollute our environment, brutalize society, make a mockery of education—the hardest hit are the young. Books like *Kusum* can sensitize them to the plight of other children, less privileged than them.

But what will it take to sensitize us to our neglect of tomorrow's citizens?

Anupa Lal has been writing for children since the early seventies.

Talking to Arup Kumar Dutta



Neena De

You would never guess from his demeanour that Arup Kumar Dutta is a very successful author. This mild-mannered and unassuming person has won international acclaim for his children's stories. He has also written books for adults involving serious scholarship like *Unicornis* and *Chai Garam* which have been very well received.

Though he has been called "Our Own Blyton" by *Illustrated Weekly* in 1989, he is not very flattered by the comparison. "A whole generation of Indian children were bred on her simply because there was nothing else for them to read" he regrets, "I wanted to create a body of children's fiction with an authentic Indian background which would fit better in this milieu and provide some values to children at the same time." He is certainly achieving what he set out to do. *Reader's Digest* declares that now, children can be weaned away from Enid Blyton to more convincing, more challenging adventures like*Trouble At Kolongijan* by this writer. Critics who rued the dearth of children's stories for Indian children at one time have acknowledged that "the winds of welcome change in 'the Indian writing in English for children scene' were blown in by the publication of (his) book *The Kaziranga Trail* in 1979.

Dutta based himself in the North-East though he had the option of living elsewhere because he wanted to write about the region that was his home and project it to the outside world. Very few people know about it though it has a lot to offer. When you read stories like *The Crystal Cave* which is a charming story set in Arunachal, you can see how well he loves the hills and forests of the land and how much he respects the simple folk, their traditions, beliefs and culture. He makes the dense jungles of Assam come alive in his stories, and sets his adventures in the sanctuaries, tea gardens or the banks of the river swollen by the monsoon rains. We learn of Elephant *Kheda* or trapping in the hills, the many vibrant festivals of people still close to the earth, their knowledge of medicinal herbs, their hopes and their fears. His Japanese translator Chitose Suzuki, herself a well known writer, declares that this is what makes the books so popular in her country. "They provide refreshing images to the Japanese readers, in fact it is the literary force of books like *The Kaziranga Trail* that has formed a link of cooperation between India and Japan".

As he shows me his books, many of which have been translated into Japanese, Russian, Hungarian, Czech and German, he suppresses a shy smile when I hold up one of the Japanese books and wonder why the drawing on the cover looks upside -down, "you turn the book the other way and read it from the back to the front" he points out. The two books he handles with particular care are on special paper and feel very light. "Can you tell me what these are? These are most precious to me". he says. Appropriately one of these is *The Blind Witness*, the story of a blind boy printed in braille in Japan.

For a person who was paid Rs.40 for his first story by *Caravan* magazine, "Love And Death In The Mountains", a rather silly and romantic tale he calls it, he has certainly come a long way. Starting with the prestigious Shankar's

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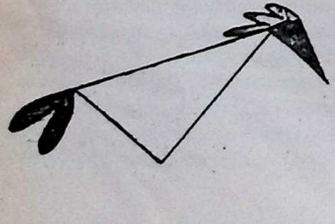
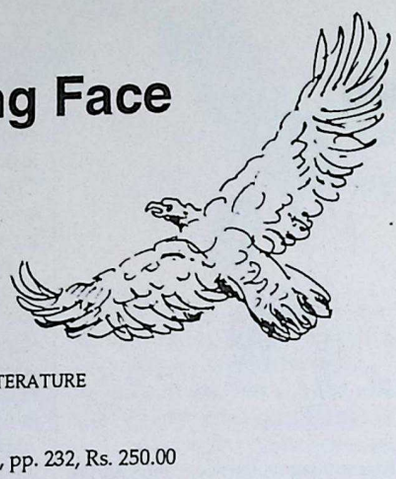
Award for his first book *The Kaziranga Trail*, he has won many prizes for his books. He is a prolific, full time writer with twelve children's adventure stories and just as many books for adults published already. *Kaziranga Trail* was followed by *Trouble At Kolongijan, The Blind Witness, Lure of Zangrila, Revenge, Smack, A Story About Tea, Save The Pool, Oh Deer, A Prince's Tale* and lastly, *The Crystal Cave*. He has been approached by Scholastic International, the biggest publishers for children's books for stories which he is writing now. Some of his books have been made into films and tele-serials. Although they have done well too, he does not seem pleased at all with the results of the transition of his stories from one media to another and thinks his books got distracted in the process.

It is obvious that Dutta understands his twelve year old and above children very well though he is quick to point out, "I am no psychologist. He knows that they have grown beyond the point where they would no longer readily accept a speaking mouse as part of their fantasy world. The fantasies created by the author for them must now be tempered with a dose of realism. Fantasy is still very important but it takes the form of situations like a computer whizkid getting kidnapped or an odyssey to recover a lost statue. Much as he hates to preach to the children since they get lectured enough at home, the classroom and the playground, he feels some values like the meaning of friendship, love for animals and a concern for the environment, amongst others must form the "thematic core" of the story. When asked if he has a definite plan according to which he works, he says, "Oh no, I have to keep the basic plot in mind but when I sit down to write, the book takes on a life of its own which I am bound to follow." Children love his books. They read them for fun, use them as textbooks, and have them as supplementary readers as far away as Japan. One thing he is confident of, despite the distractions of the visual media, is that books are here to stay. "After all, you cannot keep a television set under your pillow when you go to sleep." The number of copies of his books sold, bear testimony to this.

Neena De is a free lancecritic based in Guwahati.



The Changing Face of the Fable



Shama Futehally

THE ANIMAL FABLE IN MODERN LITERATURE

By Marie Fernandes

B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1996, pp. 232, Rs. 250.00

In this age of fabulism, the fable appears to have escaped from the safe, picture-book landscape it has inhabited so far. It used to be seen as children's literature, or moralizing literature (good for you, sure, but only when you could find the time). And there is something furry and rough-tongued about this escape: the tigers and unicorns of Jorge Luis Borges have pounced into our drawing-rooms as no literary beast would earlier have dared to do. I remember the excitement of reading Richard Adams, *Watership Down* (some twenty years ago?) and explaining passionately, to anyone who would listen, that although it was about rabbits, it was not a children's story, it was a proper novel about grown-up rabbits. I remember also how its author recreated the world at rabbit-level, so that what the book finally said about environmental destruction was not just a message but a lived experience.

The second thing that has happened to the fable is that its message has moved with the times. There is no doubt that Aesop and the Panchatantra said some splendid things, but to us their morals seem so universal as to be pleasantly easy to ignore. But George Orwell and James Thurber have produced fables which deal with our kind of politics, our kind of intrigue, even with our own refusal to believe in fables. This has blurred, in another way, the distinction between fable and life.

The third thing that has happened is that we have discovered sub-texts. This has of course happened to everything, even to fairy stories, and we have recently been chastened by learning why we really rejoice in the victory of Red Riding Hood, of what we were actually up to when we applauded Jack on his beanstalk. In the case of the animal story, this means that *The Jungle Book*, for instance, no longer remains a rattling good yarn, it also provides a (surprisingly credible) reading of Kipling's life-story and Kipling's politics.

All this becomes apparent in a very straight-forward way on reading this book. Marie Fernandes has dealt with *The Jungle Book*, with Walter de la Mare's *The Three Royal Monkeys*, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Thurber's fables and three books by Richard Adams. The strength of her book lies in its careful collating of a vast number of critical works and in presenting the relevant ideas from them simply and clearly. This will undoubtedly make it a very useful volume for anyone who is studying these texts. (I might add here that the bibliography provides evidence of an impressive amount of reference)

So the section on The Jungle Books for instance discovers the threads of the story in tales told about India by Lockwood Kipling to his son. It connects Kipling's own uneasy position between British and Indian with Mowgli's uneasy position between village and jungle. It finds the hierarchy of the jungle analogous to the caste system, it even discovers that the actions of the animals are divided according to the principles of the super-ego and the. . . and it manages to make it all stick.

In the discussion of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, too, the biographical facts prove unexpectedly relevant. The writer stresses not just the story's parallels with Communist Russia, but—perhaps a shade less convincingly—those with British India—Orwell's parodying of the Bible is carefully detailed, and provides a counterpoint to the shades of Scripture which surface in Watership Down. The theme of the Quest, the theme of dream and vision, of wise leadership by an apparently weak member of the community: these emerge in many of the books under discussion. In the same way, the theme of political power appears to be common to all the books which have been looked at, although treatment varies widely. The approach in Animal Farm for instance, makes an interesting contrast to that of Thurber's fables, which attack the anti-Communist paranoia of the McCarthy era. And Kipling's caste system is solidly different from the allegory of the British civil service which informs Watership Down.

Indeed, the linking of these themes is so illuminating that it might even have been worthwhile organizing the book 'vertically' and writing each chapter around a theme, rather than around a text.

One special little pleasure which the book provides is its synopsis of Thurber's fables. For those of us who do not know the originals, here is a sampling.

"A young tortoise who has read the fable (*The Tortoise and the Hare*) is led to believe that he can outrun a hare. After many days he finally meets a hare and challenges him to a race. The tortoise is an idealist and a dreamer. The hare is pragmatic and witty, 'What are you going to use for legs?, he asks the tortoise. He disregards the ancient story: 'Tosh', he says, you could not go fifty feet in an hour and a half, whereas I can go fifty feet in one and a fifth seconds'. The fable ends with the hare having crossed the finish line and the tortoise having gone approximately eight and three-quarter inches. The moral: 'A new broom may sweep clean, but never trust an old saw."

Incidentally, in *Beastly Tales from Here and There*, Vikram Seth provides a delightful Nineties version of the same fable—one where the Hare loses all right, but, pretty and seductive as she is, manages at the end to corner the celebrityhood and the movie rights under the nose of the worthy Tortoise. And can there be a more appropriate end to a discussion of the fable in 1998?

There is no doubt that Aesop and the Panchatantra said some splendid things, but to us their morals seem so universal as to be pleasantly easy to ignore. But George Orwell and James Thurber have produced fables which deal with our kind of politics, our kind of intrigue, even with our own refusal to believe in fables. This has blurred, in another way, the distinction between fable and life.0

Shama Futehally a writer and translator is the author of Tara Lane *and has translated the poems of Mirabai.*

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In the Traditional Motif

Brinda Dutta

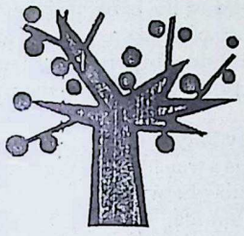
ES ON THE PEACOCK'S TAIL
97, pp. 24, Rs. 60.00

AGIC VESSELS
97, pp. 24, Rs. 60.00

CURLY TALE
98, pp. 24, Rs. 60.00

SS, DON'T BITE
98, pp. 24, Rs 60

ll published by Tulika Publishers, Chennai



As a child growing up in the forties, I lived in a secret magical world, which came alive for me once a day. Each night my grandmother told me a story and during story hour at school, my teacher Miss Bailey, did the same. The worlds of their stories were radically different. From Grandma I heard of Tenali Raman, of Vikramaditya, of Rakshasas. At school sitting around Miss Bailey I was transported to England. Her stories featured King Arthur, Goldilocks, or Winnie the Pooh. Both worlds were real to me. I saw an eccentric uncle, the elephant in the neighbourhood temple or Jim Tigers at Muharum, in Grandma's Goldilocks stories and I also knew why Goldilocks was so named. Hadn't I a friend called Lillian whose "golden" hair was set in ringlets? Life at school—service in the chapel or grace at table, dancing the sailors hornpipe and as I grew older, "socials", were all straight out of the School Girls Omnibus that I devoured. A world that was second hand, but real for a young girl in a "pavadai" and pig tails. That world disappeared gradually after Independence. Lillian and her family left, tearfully, for Australia. And my grandmother's world of Indian folk and mythical heroes is now encapsulated in *Amar Chitra Katha*.. Today's grandma is probably a successful C.E.O. who gifts Dr. Seuss or Roald Dahl to her grand daughter.

The point is, what stories do we want our children to listen to? To read? What will be the texture of their magical world? Surely it is not the world of the tube, or a diet solely of Enid Blyton or Hardy boys! I'd like to believe that we want to share with them the wealth of the stories rooted in our culture, so that they move from Tun Tunis Book to Grimm with familiarity and ease—truly children of the new century. Unfortunately what is available in English [I hasten to add] is limited. Literature for the young in regional languages is rich and varied, though hardly enjoyed in the "Metropolitan" homes. Could this be due to the parents not having enjoyed it themselves? Which is why it is such a pleasure to read four of the books for little children published by Tulika titled "Under the Banyan".

The books reviewed here are a set of four folk tales from Bihar, Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan . Vayu Naidu, the writer, has impeccable credentials. A Ph.D.[Leeds] in oral traditions of India and founder of Brumhalata Inter-cultural Story Telling Company based in Birmingham, U.K. The four stories are not run of the mill folk tales. I'd not heard of or read "*Hiss don't Bite*" or "*Eyes on the Peacock's Tail*". The other two tales are from Bihar and Tamil Nadu and are variants of well-known and well-loved stories. Vayu uses simple and easy to understand English and she has taken pains to have the story reflect the language and the social mores of the state it is from. For example the use of Tamil words or the mention of foods instantly identified as South Indian, or naming of flowers like the Kadamba; so special to West Bengal.

The books are very "little user friendly"—small enough for tiny hands and exquisitely illustrated. This in itself is a big bonus. The child is led into the vibrant visual world of folk art of each state; Madhubani for Bihar, Kalighat styles for Bengal, adaptations of clay sculptures for Tamilnadu and the Parh paintings for Rajasthan. The illustrator is Mugda Shah of N.I.D. Ahmedabad. Each of the books has a traditional motif incorporated in the inside covers. Fish for Bengal, kolam for Tamil Nadu, "Paan" leaf for Bihar, and peacocks for Rajasthan. Mugda has an eye for detail and each illustration will have children asking questions, absorbing with pleasure a past that is being swiftly eroded or enshrined in museums. The colours leap at one. A five-year-old, whom I lent the folktale from Rajasthan to, kept caressing the pages. "I can feel the colours", she said, when I asked her why she was doing so.

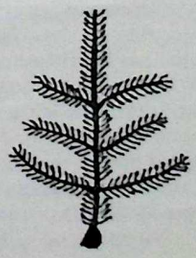
The accompanying audiotapes feature that splendid singer Usha Uthup. I was pleasantly surprised to find that she is a good narrator too. The song "On warm summer nights" has a catchy tune which kids can easily sing along with. [The lyrics come along with the cassette] Each story has a small song enforcing the theme of the story, and is sung midway through the narration. The music by Narayan Parasuram is lively, and carries traces of the music of the state the story is from. For instance the music for the story "*Magic Vessel*" is identifiably Tamil, so for the non-Tamil listeners, it is a gentle introduction to the sounds of the South.

Having said all this, I must confess that I often wished the language of the stories was more colloquial. Story-telling lends itself to "repetitions", to a line, a phrase that is central to the story and crops up at every new turn and twist in the tale. What's lost in these books is the music and the cadences of the spoken word. Perhaps in her quest for simplicity, Vayu emphasized the story element, rather than the language.

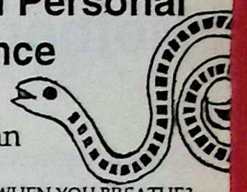
Another niggling question was that of Jadhu Bhai in "*A Curly Tale*". Why does he become a Bhooth? This is never clearly explained.

However, these are small matters, which do not detract from the pleasure these stories give. If you have a very special little person in your life, surprise the little one with a gift of one of the folk tales. It's guaranteed to delight and entertain.

Brinda Dutta is a senior member of the staff at Sardar Patel School, New Delhi.



Learning Through Personal Experience



Indira Haran

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU BREATHE?; WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CATCH A COLD?; WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU EAT?; WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LISTEN?

By Joy Richardson

Learners Press, New Delhi, 1998, Rs.35.00

Children learn easily when they can relate a subject to their daily lives and to something that happens to them personally. All the subjects dealt with in these books are experienced by children and are about things that they often wonder about. Since all these books are written in the same format by Joy Richardson, I will review them collectively.

These books are very informative and explain some of the complex functions of the body in a manner easily understood by children in primary school. The illustrations are colourful and well labeled and children will enjoy looking at the pictures.

Each book explains what happens to the child when he/she breathes, catches a cold, eats or listens and also about the organs that are involved in each process. Small experiments using items which are available at home are described in this book to help the children in understanding the functions of the body. For e.g.: In the book *What happens when you breathe*, the following experiment is given to explain the function of the lungs: Fix plastic bags to the ends of two plastic straws or pieces of tubing. Put the other ends in your mouth. Breathe out and in. Watch the bags fill up and empty like a pair of lungs.

In the book *What happens when you listen*, you are asked to hook an elastic band over a door handle and stretch it out. You are then asked to pluck the elastic band and watch it vibrate while it makes sound. When the elastic band vibrates it sets off vibrations in the air and the sound is carried to your ears.

Each book has an alphabetical index at the end so children get used to looking up topics which interest them like taste buds, sneeze and voice box. The price is quite affordable. These books will certainly be a valuable addition to any children's library.

Indira Haran is Librarian, Delhi Public School, Vasant Vihar.

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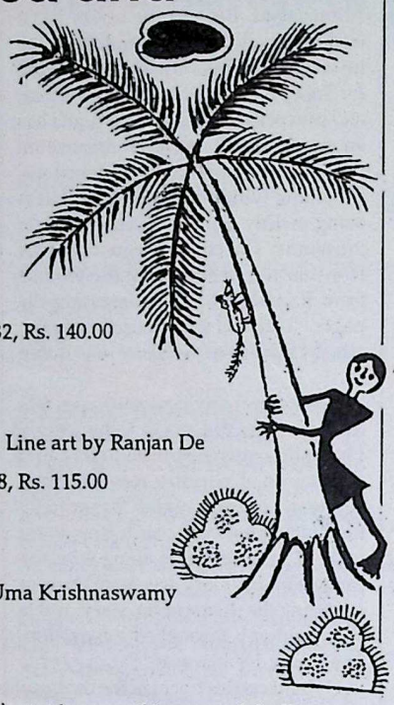
A Tree, The Sea and Mother Earth



Deepa Agrawal

A TREE IN MY VILLAGE

Written and illustrated by Paritosh Sen

Tulika Publishers, Chennai, 1998, pp. 32, Rs. 140.00

SURESH AND THE SEA

By Raghavendra Rao and Sandhya Rao. Line art by Ranjan De

Tulika Publishers, Chennai, 1998, pp. 48, Rs. 115.00

AND LAND WAS BORN

Retold by Sandhya Rao, illustrated by Uma Krishnaswamy

Tulika Publishers, pp. 16, Rs. 175.00

Trees, the sea and Mother Earth herself—these are all potent symbols of our being and our inescapable relationship with nature. While the three books under consideration are quite different in their approach, each provides deep insights into our link with the environment. At the same time one cannot help wondering how the prospective readers, probably urban children—who cannot ever hope to find time from their busy routine of school work and home work, coupled with the plethora of improving activities their parents feel compelled to load them with, to sit under a tree and watch that microcosm of life that it contains—will respond to them. With a sense of wonder, one hopes and renewed awareness of the world around them.

A Tree in my Village is a childhood reminiscence with a special focus on nature, written and illustrated by the famous artist Paritosh Sen.

The writer's fascination with the giant Arjun tree in his village comes across vividly through his descriptions as well as through the amazing illustrations that make this book a visual treat. The tree, which acquires almost mythical overtones, is a minor world in itself. As the author says, "It was so huge, so dense, that it seemed like a small forest...Its powerful build, magnificent proportions and statuesque three dimensionality were reminiscent of that monolithic ninth century Jaina figure at Sravanabelagola in Mysore."

Such comparisons place the tree firmly in perspective and provide a vivid sense of its powerful effect on a young child. The author goes on to describe the lives of the creatures that inhabited it, who were such a source of fascination to him as a boy. What is wonderful is the fact that the child comes across as being absolutely sure and confident of his relationship with the complex world of ants and buzzards and langurs and their infinitely absorbing daily existence. He is as intimately linked with them, as they are with each other. The matter-of-fact way in which he picks up the wounded bird and applies traditional herbal remedies to it is quite different from the contrived situations one often finds in books on the 'environment' specially written to improve children. This is because the author is writing spontaneously about a familiar, well loved world, unhampered by the demands of a worthy purpose at the back of his mind. He is writing about a world he knows and loves and understands, with the result that one is spared the plastic and stereotyped images of the 'environment' which result when a book is strung together after reading a few articles on the subject. Nature 'red in tooth and claw' is depicted honestly, not artificially romanticized to present a false image to children. The battle between the 'seemingly innocent and harmless' birds and the langurs who are trying to invade their territory is vividly and realistically depicted. Similarly, the war of the ants. At the end, the author nostalgically sums up what the tree meant to him and how the memory". . . opens up a thousand locked doors of the joy of life."

Thus, apart from giving a child an artist's eye view of one of nature's remarkable creations—it also provides a highly perceptive glimpse into the complex world of nature, which city children sadly miss out on.

The hard cover book is beautifully produced. Words, phrases and references which a child may not understand are explained at the end of the book. The glossary and a list of books on similar subjects are additional useful inputs. However, the price, Rs.140, is rather steep.

Suresh and the Sea, by Raghavendra Rao and Sandhya Rao is a true life tale of another relationship—between a fisherboy and Kadalamma, Ocean Mother. It is basically a book of information, a peep into the life of a young boy who lives in the village of Injambakkam, which lies about 10 km south of Chennai.

The fisherfolk depend on the sea, which provides them with a livelihood. They are so finely attuned to her ways and moods that they even forgive her vagaries, forgive her even when she is destructive. After all, she is Ocean Mother who nurtures them, so has the right to punish them too, occasionally.

Suresh's education begins early with his small kattumaram, or fishing boat which his father fashiones for him. He goes on to develop an understanding of the sea and its sounds, so important for fishermen. The ritual initiation at the age of eleven, an important rite of passage as well as the special problems small fishermen face because of mechanized fishing techniques, and the ways of fisherfolk in different parts of the world are simply and clearly described. As also their deep and abiding relationship with the sea.

As Suresh says, "The net is cast and you wait for the fish. Dawn breaks and slowly the sun rides up the sky. The waves ripple in the soft breeze. It is so quiet, so peaceful. And you are tired and hungry. My mother's cooking never tastes as good as when we eat it in the middle of the sea." An almost idyllic picture.

And yet, we are told, things are changing. The simple, old way of life is gradually being phased out. Suresh's family has raised a loan to buy an outboard motor to be able to go further into the sea and move faster. And Suresh's dream is to possess a fibre glass boat. Remarkably, no judgement is made by the authors, even though we are told that "The tall palmyra groves are almost gone." At the same time, we are informed that "technology bodes well and ill for the small fisherman."

It is worth noting that this is purely a man's world. Girls are given rides only on festivals. They handle the fi- nances, the selling of the fish. A clear definition of gender roles.

The remarkable photographs make the world of the fisherfolk come alive. And the little snippets of information given below provide a more complete picture. A well produced and well designed book which should provide absorbing reading for kids.

And Land was Born is a delight to hold and look at. A tribal tale on the creation of land, it is beautifully illustrated in the style of the original paintings of the Bhilalas, the tribe to whom this story belongs. Folk art always provokes a visceral response and though it is often said that children prefer realistic illustrations, any child would surely enjoy these colourful patterns and comic figures which are close to their own artistic efforts. The earthy colours are dramatic and eyecatching, and well suited to the story which is being illustrated.

This is a genesis tale with a difference, shot through with zany humour and delicious fantasy. It is about the quest of the *jugni matas*, or the mothers of the universe, for dry land for the animals and humans and birds who are tired of living in water all the time and always being wet. They approach God who is fast asleep and will not wake up. This irreverent depiction of the Supreme Being is one of the most delightful aspects of the story. In a world as imperfect as ours, it seems more appropriate to have a God who gets irritable when He cannot solve a problem and needs to consult an astrologer, rather than an infallible being who never goes wrong! When He is told he will not find land, he tries to evade the *jugni matas*. They, however, will not be shaken off that easily. And God has to admit defeat! Well, there are some problems even He cannot solve.

After several twists and turns and those unexpected, inexplicable happenings, which form part of the peculiar logic of folk tales the determined *jugni matas* succeed in their quest. "And land was born. As wind and rain touched it, the land grew. Slowly, trees began to dot the earth, and grass and shrubs and herbs..."

A charming and entertaining tale which children are bound to enjoy, though the book seems very highly priced at Rs.175.

Deepa Agarwal has written several books for children and has won many awards for her work.

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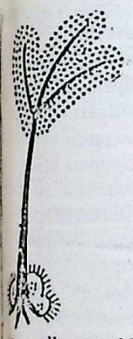
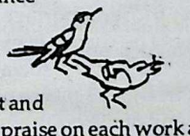
The Colours of Joy

The colours spill over the table and sheets of paper lie crumpled under my feet. Children, their hands smeared with colour, laugh and shout as they hold up their paintings for display. I have just finished an art class with my students and though the classroom looks like a battlefield we have created wonderful works of art and greatly enjoyed ourselves. We have seen rain fall on green fields, walked in a garden full of strange flowers, met new friends with crooked noses and button eyes, eaten fruit from tiny trees with giant leaves. The process of painting is a powerful teaching tool and helps children with disabilities to experience a new world. Besides giving them endless hours of fun, it enables them to develop their hand-eye coordination and communication skills. When' I first began to teach art to disabled children I was not sure how to go about it since I had no training as an art teacher or special educator. But despite my lack of experience I found this was one of the easiest and most enjoyable art activities I had ever done.



All children love drawing and painting if you allow them to do it in their own way but children with mental and physical disabilities enjoy it much more because it is one of the few activities they can do on their own.

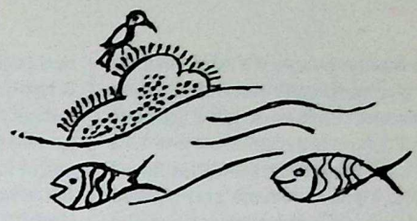
Ever since I began doing art workshops, seven years ago, for very Special Arts India, an organization that runs projects in art, music and theater for various special schools, I have never come across a child who does not want to paint. Each child has his or her own method of approaching a painting and most of them, however disabled, are very particular about their choice of colours. Ritika, a young girl with Down's Syndrome, loves yellow and I always have to make sure there is plenty of bright yellow in the paint box for her, otherwise she will refuse to work. She paints with confidence and is always eager to share her view with the other children. But Pritish is a shy boy with multiple disabilities but his fading eyesight and limited arm movement does not stop him from painting with skill. All I do is place a tray of crayons on his desk and leave him alone. Slowly, with painstaking effort he picks up the colours he wants and draws with total concentration. Art activities bring so much joy to a disabled child that it can often motivate a child with severe disabilities to make that extra effort and sometimes even overcome a minor handicap. The process of painting not only creates a sense of self worth, it also allows the child to think at a different, often more complex level. It teaches him to use his imagination not just in his painting but in other real life situations as well. Pooja, a hearing impaired girl who can pronounce only a few sounds, will explain her painting with expressive gestures in case I have missed out something.



Children love showing off their finished works of art and this is where they need genuine appreciation. I lavish praise on each work and sometimes when my words are not good enough, I get a small nudge, or worse, a hurt look from my students. Many of them do not know my name and some of them cannot remember who I am right after I leave the class but they recognize my bag. The minute I enter the class they greet the bag filled with brushes, crayons and paintboxes with shouts of joy and rush forward to touch it. My art bag is filled with magic for them and they know by instinct that it carries all the things they need to feel happy and able, even if it is just for a few hours.

Bulbul Sharma is a well-known writer and illustrator.

The Find



By Pratibha Nath

Nitai stood at the far end of his grandfather's paddy fields. All around him the fresh green paddy plants waved in the breeze. The sky was a cloudless, brilliant blue. Nitai could tell it was around midday, for the sun was right overhead. And behind him, grandfather's coconut palms threw only the smallest shadows. Nitai knew that shadows lengthened as the sun travelled west. When it finally sank behind the bamboo thickets, shadows swallowed everything. His entire village with its twenty odd huts, cowsheds, the Kali temple, the village pond—they were all plunged into darkness.

Nitai did not like the dark. When it was dark, he had to stay indoors. He was not allowed to go out and play. His father and grandfather came back from a bath at the stream behind their hut and they all had their evening meal. But Nitai never enjoyed the meal because his father kept asking, "Did you go to school today? What did you learn? I'll ask Master Moshai if you are making good progress or not. Come on, tell me, you good for nothing fellow, did you learn anything today?"

Nitai could not answer his father's questions because he never did go to school. He hated school. He disliked being cooped up in a small hut in order to learn from a book. He knew the Bengali alphabet, he knew simple addition and subtraction. When his mother sent him to the village grocer to buy salt or tea leaves, he always brought back the correct change. What more did he have to learn?

From the far end of the paddy fields Nitai could see his hut. His mother stood in the open doorway. Maybe she was calling out to him, 'Nitai, Nitai'. Perhaps the rice was ready early and she wanted him to come and eat while it was still hot. But he did not want to go home and eat. The sun was still warm. It would be fun to swim in the pond just now. Maybe he could catch a few small fish for a nice spicy curry with the evening meal for him. Nitai turned his back on his grandfather's paddy fields and set off towards the village pond.

The pond was a fifteen minute walk from Nitai's hut. There was a huge banyan tree close by. People believed that the tree was haunted so they did not like to go near it, even in the daytime. But Nitai was not afraid. That afternoon when he found the pond deserted, he was delighted. He took off his shirt, threw it on the ground and jumped into the pond. For a long time Nitai swam about in the water. When he had had enough, he climbed on to the bank again. Digging into his bag he took out a gamchha (fine towel) because it could be used for catching fish. He held the two ends in his hands and allowed the gamchha to float idly in the water. The moment a fish swam on to the towel, Nitai immediately shot to his feet, lifting the tower out of the water, so the fish was held as in a net. He had often caught fish that way. But on that particular afternoon, he seemed to be out of luck. There were hardly any fish around. Perhaps the sun was too warm and they were resting at the bottom of the pond. Suddenly Nitai lost his patience. He threw away the gamchha, took a deep breath, held it and dived headlong into the pond. "I'll catch the fish, wherever they are," he thought. "Grab them with my bare hands, that's what I'll do."

The water stung his eyes and something rang in his ears as he fumbled among the pebbles at the bottom of the pond. But there were no fish to be seen. Nitai surfaced, gasping for breath. For a few moments he sat on the bank. Then he walked to the other end of the pond. Once again he took a deep breath, held it and dived headlong into the pond. At the bottom he ran into a lot of tiny fish and sent them scurrying in different directions. Nitai gave chase but they were too quick for him. Disappointed again, Nitai rose to the surface. "Not my day for fish curry," he thought.

But as he swam to the surface, something caught his eye. Clinging to the sides of the pond were some strange looking shells. Nitai wanted to pick up a few but he was really out of wind and had to rush back to the top again. Back on the edge of the pond, Nitai wiped the water from his face. A shiver ran through his body. He was cold. How he wished to wipe himself down with the dry ends of the gamchha, put on his shirt and head home. His mother must be worrying about him. . . But those shells. How could he go without those shells? For the third time Nitai took a deep breath, held it and dived.

The shells came off easily enough. Four of them. Nitai grabbed two in each hand and made a dash upwards. Half way up one of the shells nearly slipped out of his grasp and in trying to grab it again, Nitai lost valuable time.

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Just before he cleared the surface of the water he completely ran out of wind, gasped and took in a good gulp of water. Back on the edge of the pond, he threw himself on the ground and closed his eyes. His head swam and his legs folded up in an involuntary cramp. But the shells were safe under him.

When Nitai woke up, the sun hung low in the sky and the breeze was cool. He rose quickly to get his shirt and there were the shells on the grass, where he had been lying. Black and grey coloured shells. Four of them, all different in size. The largest was some four fingers in length from end to end. They were really two shells each, placed one over the other, edge on edge and closed tight. From his sling bag he took out a small pen knife which he always carried around for whittling sticks or making whistles from reeds. He picked up the smallest shell. Inserting the tip of the knife at the mouth of the shell he prised it open. There was a layer of some moist, smooth, greyish stuff inside. Nitai threw it away. The second shell was the same. And the third. Nitai threw away both. He was on the point of throwing away the last one too when he decided against it. His knife had grown a little slippery. He wiped it on the grass and once again inserted the tip of the blade in the right place. The shell fell open and Nitai gasped in surprise.

Embedded in the moist, greyish white matter within was a small round object, about the size of a large pea. It wasn't white in colour and it wasn't silver but a bit of both and so beautiful that Nitai had never before seen anything like It. He took out the object, placed it on the palm of his hand and turned it around so it caught the light of the sun. And wonder filled Nitai's soul, for the little round object seemed to glow with a soft light, with here and there a hint of rainbow colours. "What is this?" thought Nitai in ecstasy. "What on earth is this gorgeous thing that I have found? And who can tell me something about it?"

At first he thought he'd take his find to his mother. Quietly, without telling the others. Maybe she would know. But he decided against it. His mother was too busy cooking and cleaning and attending to everybody's needs. Where would she find the time to sit with Nitai and talk? His father? Oh no. He would probably grab that beautiful object and throw it into the manure pit. He had done that to the gorgeous peacock feathers Nitai had picked up in the forest one day. His grandfather was losing his eyesight, anyway. He would not be able to appreciate the beauty of what Nitai had found.

For a long time Nitai sat on the edge of the pond and thought. And then suddenly he made up his mind. He'd take his find to the master moshai. Hope rose in his heart. At the same time fear gnawed at him. His master moshai was full of knowledge. He would be able to tell what Nitai had found inside the shell. . . Oh yes, master moshai was a nice man. Kind, soft spoken. But sometimes he got angry too. Suppose he got angry with Nitai for not attending school? . . . For a long time Nitai sat there, torn with doubts. Then he looked at his find again and that decided him. He simply *had* to learn more about that shimmering round object. He *would* go to master moshai, and that was that.

It was early evening when Nitai reached master moshai's house. Master moshai sat across his threshold with a glass of tea in his hand. "Oh come, Nitai," he said. "Come and sit with me. What brings you here? Have you been home yet? Have you eaten?" Then, without waiting for an answer he called to his wife, "Bring another glass of tea and something to eat."

Master moshai waited till Nitai had taken two fistfulls of 'moori' (puffed rice), washing it down with sips of tea. Then he asked again, "Yes Nitai, perhaps now you can tell me what brings you here. We haven't seen you in school for a long time now."

From his shirt pocket Nitai took out the shell, opened it and laid it before master moshai. The little round object lay where Nitai had found it—embedded in the moist, greyish white matter within the shell. Master moshai gazed at it for a few minutes before he found his voice again. "Where did you find this?" he asked.

"In the village pond. Under water. It was clinging to the side of the pond."

"Amazing!" said master moshai. He went inside the house and came back with a magnifying glass. For a long time he examined the shell and its contents under the magnifying glass. "Amazing!" he said again. "Who would have dreamt of it?"

Suddenly Nitai's patience gave way. "What is it, master moshai?" he cried. "Please tell me quick."

Master moshai smiled. Patting Nitai on the head he said, "My son, I do believe that round object within the shell is a pearl. Not only is it beautiful to look at, it could be worth a lot of money."

"A pearl?" cried Nitai. "What on earth is a pearl?"

"Come with me and I'll tell you," said master moshai, rising to his feet and leading the way into the house. He opened a cupboard, took out a globe and placed it on a table near a window. The globe rolled in the light of the setting sun. 'This is what our earth looks like," said master moshai. "Round like a ball. Did you know?"

Nitai shook his head.

Master moshai smiled. With one finger he traced the parts coloured blue. "These are the seas and the oceans, all full of water."

Nitai was listening but seemed a trifle restless. "But . . . what have the oceans of the world got to do with this thing that I have found?" he blurted out.

"Everything. Pearls have normally been found deep under the ocean."

"And how do people get them?" asked Nitai.

"They dive. Just as you dived today. They keep diving and bringing up these shellscalled oysters. Out of a hundred shells they bring, only 5 or 10 may have a pearl. So a lot of effort is wasted. You also got a pearl in only 1 out of 4 shells, isn't it? But your shells are fresh water mussels, not oysters. Sometimes pearls are also found in mussels, specially in China."

"I don't understand, master moshai," said Nitai. "How can a pearl form inside a shell?"

"An oyster or mussel is really a living animal and this greyish white is its flesh. A mussel lives in water. Sometimes a worm or grain of sand gets inside the oyster and causes a lot of irritation. The oyster can't throw it out. So, to make it smooth, the oyster covers it with layers of secretion. When the secretion hardens, it becomes a pearl."

Nitai was listening as in a daze. "Master moshai," he asked, "where did you learn all this?"

"From books, Nitai, from books," cried master moshai, suddenly very excited. "Books have so much to tell us. I still have two cupboards full of books so I can read more and learn more. . .

"Master moshai, you . . . you're still . . learning?" said Nitai, his eyes wide open.

"I am. Learning is fun, Nitai," said master moshai. "The world is full of mysteries. . ."

Nitai took a deep breath. "Master moshai," he said, "may I please come to school from tomorrow? Will you teach me to read?"

Master moshai reached out and caught Nitai's hand. "I will."

"Will you teach me to read big books like the ones you have here?"

"I will, In time you'll learn to read each one of these books. . . If you work hard, that is."

"Oh, I'll work hard all right," said Nitai, jumping up. 'Thank you, master moshai, thank you so much." And with that he dashed out of the hut. He ran all the way home to find his mother standing near the cowshed, lantern in hand, peering into the dark. Nitai ran and threw his arms around her. "Look what I found today. Open your hand." He put the pearl on her palm. She looked at it and her eyes opened wide with wonder. "Oh, it's beautiful!" she cried. "It's for you, Ma," said Nitai. "Get it made into a ring for yourself. Some day I'll tell you all about it." His mother smiled and patted him on the head. "Come on now," she said. "Your rice is waiting."

Pratibha Nath is a writer of fiction for the young.

One World:
A Collection of Writing for Young People

One World is a collection of writings for children, especially in the critical 12 to 15 years age group. It is the second in the theme-based collections series from Tulika Publishers; the first was *Sorry, Best Friend!* on the theme of communal harmony published in March 1997.

While the first book was a collection of short stories, *One World* has poetry, prose, reportage, fiction, memoir. . . thus taking the series a step further. The theme is explored in terms of science, the environment, remembered history, social document, sports, religion and social consciousness through 13 pieces of inspired and inspiring writing. Questions listed at the end of the book aim to make children/teachers/readers reflect, raise questions and debate the issues raised in each piece. The book offers excellent value education and, like *Sorry, Best Friend!* is ideal for inclusion in the school syllabus as supplementary reading.

The contributors are: Gita Mehta, Ashokamitran, Safdar Hashmi, Ambai (C.S. Lakshmi), Paul Zacharia, Raghavendra Rao, Shobhit Mahajan, Geetha Varadan, Prabhakar Rao, V. Ramnarayan, Poile Sengupta, Nitin Madhav and Sandhya Rao. The book is edited by Radhika Menon and Sandhya Rao.

A very special book brought to you by

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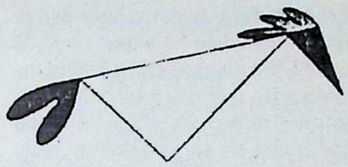
Science is Fun



Shobhit Mahajan

AY AND FIND OUT ABOUT SCIENCE: EASY EXPERIMENTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN
Janice VanCleave
hn Wiley and Sons, 1996, pp. 122, $12.95

IDE TO THE BEST SCIENCE FAIR PROJECTS
Janice VanCleave
hn Wiley and Sons, 1997, pp. 156, $14.95

HAT IF? MIND BOGGLING SCIENCE QUESTIONS FOR KIDS
Robert Ehrlich
hn Wiley and Sons, 1998, pp. 178, $12.95

HE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY INCREDIBLE EARTH: A BOOK OF ANSWERS FOR KIDS
Ann-Jeanette Campbell and Ronald Rood
hn Wiley and Sons, 1996, pp. 186, $12.95

One of the crucial differences between the environment in which today's children and se growing up even half a generaon ago is the ubiquity of technology. om satellite television to multimedia mputers, from laser discs to video mes, the child today is completely amped with high technology, a state affairs which was inconceivable even decade ago. But ironically, even with this technology, it is not at all clear at the aptitude for science in children ncreasing. In fact, all trends are to the ntrary. What we are witnessing is an normous increase in available infoation on tap but not necessarily in cientific aptitude. In fact, it can be gued that all these technologies are romoting a passive approach to learng science and are hence in the long n do more harm than good.

Among the various factors respone for children turning away from ience is the abominable quality of ence resource material. While it is e that the text books are of poor ality, the teaching of science in even e so called progressive schools leaves uch to be desired. The stress is on rote arning and the children are swamped with facts. They are not encouraged to sk questions about their surroundgs and there is nothing in the curricuum which encourages creativity and a pirit of inquiry. The net result is the low attrition of the natural curiosity in the child and the equating of science with a bunch of facts and formulae which need to be memorized. The true joy of exploration and learning by doing is lost.

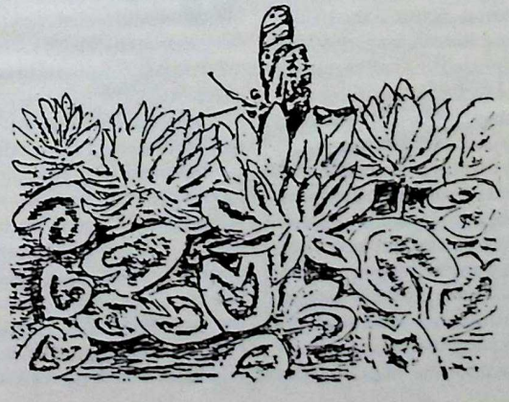
Janice VanCleave's books provide a very refreshing antidote to this malaise. *Play and Find Out about Science* is meant for 4-7 year olds and is a collection of easy experiments on a variety of topics like light, sound, electricity etc.. The experiments are easy to perform and yet are very instructive. Each experiment starts as a question like "why do boats float' or " what makes a rainbow" and then seeks to find out by conducting a simple experiment. The materials mentioned in the book are easily available around the house and are safe to use for children. Each of them elucidates a key concept like gravity, refraction of light, flow of current etc. It is a wonderful book which all 5 year olds will enjoy and in the process learn important concepts about how nature works. For the parents, the book has a concise explanation of the various principles and a useful glossary of the terms used.

Her other book about Science Projects is a bit more advanced. It gives complete descriptions of projects on about 50 topics in science. The topics cover areas like physics, chemistry, engineering and biology. The projects are easy to perform and once again clearly illustrate an important concept in the relevant areas. Each experiment starts once again as a question and then investigates it by an experiment. Besides the very lucid step-by-step instructions, there are very useful hints on do's and don'ts and also guiding rules for displaying the projects. There are also explanations provided for each investigation and a suggestion for further inquiry. The choice of projects is excellent and the presentation is very clear. There is a very useful bibliography and a glossary in the end. This book should be very useful for the precocious pre-teenager or even a slightly older child. One just hopes that it is not used as another guide book by beleaguered parents who need to do their children's holiday homework on science but is used by the kids themselves to explore exciting areas of science.

One of the most enjoyable as well as irritating things about a child is the constant barrage of questions that one has to face. What if there was no gravity on earth? What if we went to live on Pluto? What if I dug a hole through the earth and so on. This extraordinary curiosity is what distinguishes a child from an adult. The adult is for the most part hesitant to display ignorance while a child has no qualms about asking the most outlandish questions. Robert Ehrlich's book is excellent for such a curious child. Written for ages 8-12, the book is structured as answers to "what if" questions. Each question is answered by a simple statement, followed by a longer explanation of the science behind the answer. There are boxes which provide hints for experiments that can be performed, fun facts and trivia and most importantly other interesting questions that one can ask about the topic. As the author says in the introduction, "[Science] is a way of learning about our world by asking questions, doing experiments and seeing what happens. The author is a professor of Physics and has written several well known popular science books like. *The Cosmological Milkshake* and *Why Toast Lands Jelly Side Down*. The book should be an ideal companion for a growing child and will nurture the natural curiosity in her.

The New York Public Library is one of the largest and best run public library systems in the US. It also brings out a series of reference books, like the New York Public Library Desk Reference which are fairly popular. The book *Incredible Earth* is one of the New York Public Library Series and deals with Earth Sciences. "How was the earth formed?" When did life begin?" Why did dinosaurs become extinct?" These are the kinds of questions which are answered in this fascinating book. The book is a mine of information about topics related to our earth. Once again, the book contains answers to questions which are commonly asked by kids about our planet. The answers given are very clear and can be easily followed by an average middle school child. The answers are supplemented by boxes which contain additional information and several interesting facts. For instance, pumice, the highly porous, feather light rock is actually a volcanic rock and is one of the ingredients in toothpaste! Or that typhoon is a mispronunciation of the Chinese word ta-feng which means violent winds. The book is very well produced and has an excellent glossary and a bibliography for interested readers.

The paucity of good science books, both text books and reference material in India is one of the main reasons of the decline in interest in science among the school children. Though many of them may take up science as a subject in their high school, it is mostly because it is prerequisite to obtain admission in professional colleges and not because of any inherent interest in the subject. This thesis is borne out by the fact that the enrollment in undergraduate science courses is falling drastically. If one could make learning of science fun, it is possible that more students will go in for science out of choice rather than compulsion. To make the learning of science a creative activity which is essentially an exploration, we need more books like these together with teachers who can enthuse the students to be inquisitive and courageous to speculate.



Shobhit Mahajan teaches in the Department of Physics & Astrophysics, University of Delhi.

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Under the Apple Logo

C. Uday Bhaskar

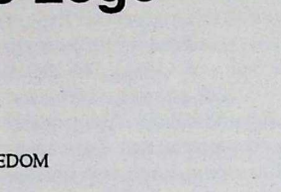
NELSON MANDELA: NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM
By Barry Deneberg
1991, reprint 1995, pp.178,

I HAVE A DREAM: THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING
By Margaret Davidson
1986, pp.127,

TITANIC CROSSING
By Barbara Williams
1995, pp.167, Rs.90.00

THE MUSIC OF DOLPHINS
By Karen Hesse
1996, pp.

All from Scholastic, New York



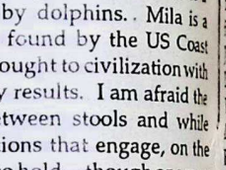
Books for children is reasonably big business in the USA and the competition with other forms of learning and entertainment is more intense there than it is here in India. One cannot recall any one publishing house having found a niche in this part of the world and the four books under review have all been published by Scholastic Inc.which operates out of New York, Toronto, London, Auckland and Sydney—in other words a biggish swathe of the English reading world of children. The publishers appear to have a popular biography series and another one of fiction that goes under the apple logo—well before the fruit became synonymous with the computer revolution! Interestingly, two of the four books dwell on well known figures in this century—the late Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela—who individually contributed in no small measure to end racial discrimination in their own times and thereby became legends. Mr. Nelson Mandela—now the grand old man of South Africa, like other tall men in history who preceded him, epitomizes the spirit of perseverance and conviction against overwhelming odds and his success in bringing the shameful practice of apartheid to an end has a special resonance for all Indians. Apartheid means 'separateness' in the Afrikaans language, and this distinction based on race and colour was adopted as a formal policy by the all white South African government in 1948. This deplorable practice, fiercely resisted by the black population of the country was finally dismantled when Nelson Mandela was elected South Africa's President in April 1994. Deneberg's biography is comprehensive and provides a very readable account of Mandela's odyssey which included 26 lonely years in prison under very harsh conditions. The book traces the saga from the birth of the infant Rolihlahla to a tribal chief in 1918 in the Transkei region of South Africa to the evolution into young Nelson (the name he assumed) who became a lawyer and finally the transformation into Mandela—a symbol of hope for the oppressed black people of Africa in later decades. India under its first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was in the vanguard of condemning the practice of apartheid when it was tacitly ignored by the rest of the world and it is apt that the famous Mandela phrase that there is "No Easy Walk to Freedom" was taken from a speech of Nehru.

The Martin Luther King biography is relatively smaller with bigger type-face but is in keeping with the biography template. Here again was a leader who changed the course of American history by sheer dint of courage and conviction and the indignity of being a black person in the American South in the 1930's when the young Martin was growing up is vividly captured in small vignettes by Davidson. Martin Luther King was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi in his advocacy of non-violence for black Americans in their war to end racial segregation and one of the illustrations in the book shows an earnest young man poring over a Gandhi reader with a Bible next to him—a poignant juxtaposition for two great human beings. Davidson introduces a pace and urgency in the King narrative that is commendable and the fact that the Nobel Prize for peace was awarded to King in 1964 when he was a mere 35 years old, the youngest recipient of the coveted prize, is ample testimony to his triumph— though he ultimately died to the bullet of an assassin in 1968. These books may have been published in the USA but they are meant for children the world over and to that extent if there is one suggestion, it would be to make the narrative more "child-friendly" by embellishing such biographies with more detail of such great men as little boys. It may call for more research than is available in standard biographies and perhaps some imagination. And in the same vein, more illustrations—as opposed to news photographs—may have an added appeal to the younger cross-section.

The other two books under the apple insignia are fictional to an extent, in that the Titanic tale is based on the actual events of 1912, while the story of the child brought up by the dolphins is in the Mowgli genre but with mixed results. The Titanic story, it must be noted, was written before the film caught the public imagination last year and Williams weaves her story with dexterity. The sinking of the ship is told through the perspective of a young boy Albert Trask and it is an engrossing tale—though it is familiar and has been dealt with many times. This is where Williams scores and in her post-script she refers to a single real-life incident of the Titanic giving her the 'spark' of a young thirteen year old boy being prevented from entering one of the lifeboats since he was considered to be a man. This is a tidy tale and should find its way to many kids—but it is a pity that there is not a single illustration in what is deemed a children's book. What does Albert look like—is a question that every child would like answered through image. Maybe a reprint can redress this lacuna.

The last book is a take-off on a familiar theme—children brought up in the wild by animals. While Mowgli, the wolf-child of Kipling fame is well-known and is now immortalized on screen in scores of languages, this time it is a child reared by dolphins. Mila is a strange child found by the US Coast Guard and brought to civilization with not too happy results. I am afraid the book falls between stools and while there are sections that engage, on the whole it fails to hold—though one may have lost the innocence that a less sullied sensibility may bring to bear. The price of these books in rupees is indicated only on one volume—the Titanic tale—which at Rs.90 is within the affordable range, when some kids can afford to buy a pair of Nike shoes at Rs.4,000 to Rs.5,000. If these books do come to the subcontinent, translations into Indian languages ought to be considered.

C. Uday Bhaskar is keenly interested in children's literature.



Dr. Richard Bamberger:
Giving a new lease of life to fairy tales

Swapna Datta

When a scholarship from the International Institute of Children's Literature and Reading Research, Vienna, came my way this August, I decided to make a study of Austrian folk and fairy tales.

I soon realized that Austria was remarkably rich in fairy tales. So much so, that there were several volumes of folklore about each and every part of Austria. They were beautifully produced, attractively illustrated and most popular with children. I also learnt that like the brothers Grimm in Germany, most of these tales and legends had been painstakingly collected and retold by a famous scholar—Dr. Richard Bamberger, founder President of IBBY and Secretary General of the Austrian Young People's Book Club. Most of the fairy tale collections I found in the Institute library were written by him.

Dr. Bamberger writes in German but his work has been translated into all major European and several Asian languages. I was thrilled to learn that he lived in Vienna and promptly asked for an appointment. His secretary sent me a fax saying I could meet him the next week. I spent the whole week reading his books. What he thought of fairy tales was obvious. 'No child ought to grow up without fairy tales. The fairy tale is filled with a wealth of magical

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vistas and with the innocence of the child's soul' he states in the introduction, 'It is the first faint gleam of poetry to touch the growing sensibility of the child'. Like the Grimm Brothers, he too feels that 'Fairy tales are told so that the child's earliest thoughts and emotions may awaken and flourish in their pure and gentle light'

Dr. Richard Bamberger was born in 1911 in Meddling in Tal, a small village in Lower Austria. After qualifying from the Training College for Teachers at Krems he studied German and English at the University of Wien and taught Germanic languages and English for many years. He had also been the founder and head of 'Buchklub der Jugend', and President, International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research. He now heads the Institute of Textbook Research and Promotion of Learning which he founded in 1981. I asked him several questions about fairy tales and their importance and taped his answers. Here are some of them, in his own words.

Why does he consider the fairy tale so important?

'The hero of the fairy tale is a simplified image of man on his journey through life, a journey which inevitably leads him through darkness and difficulty. But on the way the hero battles against the powers of evil and returns victorious to the world of goodness and light. In this way the fairy tale increases the child's confidence in his own strength and he knows that he can overcome evil.'

Do modern thinkers agree with him?

'Most modern psychologists are of the opinion that fear and horror are a part of life itself. In the fairy tale the child not only experiences this fear but also learns how to overcome it. We stand in the middle of life and we know that every situation has two sides to it. Where there is light there is inevitably deep shadow. The truth often lies between the two.'

Was that the reason he wrote so many collections of fairy tales?

'Yes. The family circle is often less close nowadays than it was in the past. Fairy tale is no longer transmitted orally from generation to generation. Hence the fairy tale collections! The folk tale remains the magic key to a power of inner experience and imagination which determines man's relation to the world and his fellow men and to contemporary and eternal values. It is for this reason that books of folk tales and fairy tales ought to form the basis of every child's library. If he can learn to take delight in them and to look after them carefully they will indeed become a signpost to the wider world of literature in later life and the enduring foundation of a lifelong love of good books'.

With *My First Big Storybook* Dr Richard Bamberger of Austria brought to the youngest children a new collection of stories from many different lands. This volume was placed on the Honours List for the Austrian State Prize. *My First Big Storybook* contains 73 folk and fairy tales. *My Second Big Storybook* has 49 stories and *My Third Big Storybook* has 18 stories. All of them are extremely popular not only in Austria but all over the world.

Had he graded the books deliberately?

"Yes' assented Dr. Bamberger, 'A child derives more pleasure from books if they are properly suited to his age. That is why I have offered a varied selection of stories from all over the world, sorted into three different steps or age groups.' The stories in the first book are from many different lands. Some are old favourites such as *The fox and the stork and Rumplestiltskin.* The second volume includes stories from varied and exotic sources and offers a wealth of magic and poetry. The third consists mainly of less known fairy tales from far away countries such as Norway and the Asian countries. They also include popular tales from Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde.

'The longer tales have another greater gift to offer—they have many of the qualities of true poetry and great literature and will lead you on into the wide and fascinating realm of books which is eagerly sought by everyone who wants more from life than a dull, practical, day-to-day existence' says Dr. Bamberger in the introduction of these three volumes, 'I should like to think that a great many of you will find your way into this wonderful magic realm which exists not merely in dreams and imagination but between the two covers of a book.'

Dr. Bamberger did something else which is equally important. He founded the Book club for Young People in Vienna. He took special care improving the yearbooks which were extensively read at the Book Club. Before long the club had over 8,50,000 members. Hence all important publishers tried to have extracts of their new books included in the yearbooks before actually printing them. Manuscripts which were not approved by the Book Club were rejected by the publishers too. This had a tremendous influence on the development of Austrian children's literature.

The Book Club was further promoted when Dr. Bamberger wrote over 20 books and presented 500 papers on the importance of reading and gave more than 3000 lectures on the subject all over Austria. He founded and edited a yearbook for teachers called *Barke* which included articles on children's books, the importance of reading, readability and text difficulty and textbook research. It comprised over 500 pages. He was also the founder editor of the magazines *Jugend and Buch, Bookbird* and the newsletters of the *Buchklub*. He went on extensive lecture tours in Germany, USA, England, Ireland, Israel and Eastern Asia, winning many Decorations, Honours and trophies for his contribution to children's literature.

Did he have a message for the writers of today, I asked before leaving.

'Remember, you must set a good example yourself. Lay aside the latest glossy magazine and let your child see you absorbed in your book. Sad indeed is the home where the family cannot gather quietly round the fire with their books. They do not know what they are missing.'

Swapna Datta has been writing and transtating books for children for two decades and has around 24 titles to her credit.

A Bengali Flavour

Bulbul Sharma

FOUR HEROES & A HAUNTED HOUSE
By Narayan Gangopadhyay
Tara Publishing, Chennai, 1998, pp. 114, Rs. 80.00

Children's writing in Bengali has always been innovative, humorous and so readable that even adults love reading these books. Many well known writers of Bengal have written stories for children and besides formidable names like Rabindranath Tagore, Sukumar Roy, Satyajit Ray there are many other popular writers who have created delightful stories for children which range from detective fiction, historical tales, adventure and ghost stories. *'Four Heroes and a Hunted Haouse'* is a ghost story with a difference which its author has crafted in an unusual style. Witty, whimsical and full of funny situations, this adventure story written by the well known Bengali writer Narayan Gangopadhyay is a story both children and adults will love to read. Translated from Bengali by Swati Bhattacharjee *'four Heroes and A Haunted House* has all the ingredients needed to make a good yarn for children. Tenida, a popular character in Bengali children's literature is here along with his friends each one a faint hearted hero with voracious appetites. Though all they want is *'luchi'* with mutton curry' and a comfortable bed to sleep in, the four heroes are plunged into a series of wild adventures with ghosts who smoke *'bidis'* and men who look like giants from fairy tales. 'Gajeshwar gave us a look. The very sight of his eyes turned our blood to water. Beside Gajeshwar, even the huge Swami looked like a stick. His complexion was soot-black, his size like an elephant, his head shaved with only a *'shikha'* hanging from the middle of it. Gajeshwar looked at us with his tiny eyes and said, "Boys are like that these days Prabhu, like apes from Kishkindha. Would Prabhuji like me to box their ears, one by one"? If Gajeshwar boxed our ears they will surely come off in his hands. The four of us were terrified, and huddled together like jalebis'. The not-so-brave heroes run around the jungles of Jhanto Hills, chased by villains named Ghachang Fu—a ferocious Chinese bandit and Swami Ghutghutananda, a sadhu with a weakness for 'rasogulla' but the boys are always saved in the nick of time as their enemies either skid on banana skins or get stung by helpful scorpions. Funny, whimsical and written in a friendly effortless style, this adventure story for children has real conversations, real food and real ghosts and will amuse and entertain every child and adult who reads it.

Bulbul Sharma is a writer and artist. She has published three collections of short stories and works as an art teacher for disabled children.

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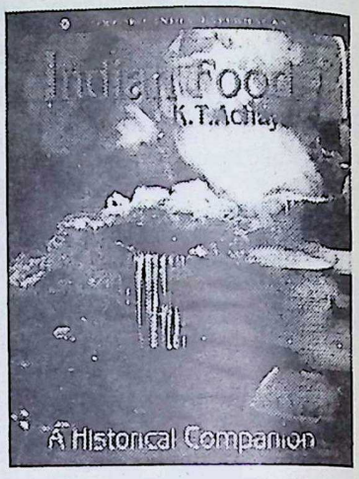


Indian Food: A Historical Companion

K.T. Achaya's books include *The Food Industries of British India* (OUP, 1994) and *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food* (forthcoming from OUP).

- exhaustive and lucid
- winner of the Premio Langhe Cerreto
- well illustrated

This Companion outlines the enormous variety of cuisines, food materials and dishes that collectively fall under the term 'Indian food'.

Drawing upon material from a variety of sources—literature, archaeology, epigraphic records, anthropology, philology, and botanical and genetic studies—the book chronologically details the history of Indian food, beginning with prehistoric times and ending with British rule. Extensively revised since its first publication in 1994, this rich storehouse of fascinating information on Indian food will interest food aficionados, historians, anthropologists and general readers.

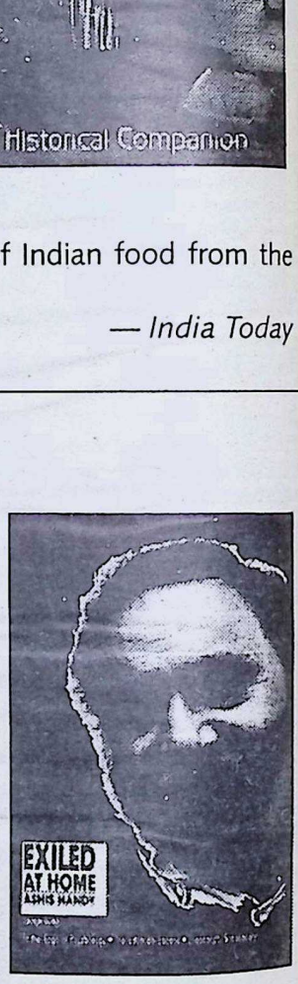
'Achaya has done a commendable job of a daunting task, namely, writing the history of Indian food from the earliest, almost prehistoric days, to the present time.

— India Today

0 19 564416 6 1998 (OIP) 280 x 220 mm 338 pp. Rs 395 IP

Exiled at Home

Comprising *At the Edge of Psychology; The Intimate Enemy; Creating a Nationality*



Ashis Nandy is a distinguished political psychologist, sociologist of science, and futurist. These respected books on culture, politics and systems of knowledge have had a wide readership and are available here for the first time within a single volume. This edition also includes an Introduction written by D.R. Nagaraj.

At the Edge of Psychology examines the links between mind, politics and culture in India, especially the continuities and breaks in the culture of Indian politics and the sources of violence in public life. *The Intimate Enemy* is a study of the cultural psychology of colonialism. It explores the sources of creative politics and resistance to western colonialism in British India. *Creating a Nationality* narrates, mainly through the experiences of the inhabitants of Ayodhya, the movement culminating in the destruction of the Babri Masjid. Built into the narrative is an analysis of the culture of communal conflict, the nature of organized mass violence, and the political psychology of Hindu nationalism.

0 19 564177 9 1998 215 x 140 mm 528 pp. Rs 425 A

Divide and Quit: An Eye-witness Account of the Partition of India

Penderel Moon was an ICS officer in the British government that ruled India. He was a witness to the events of the Partition.

This book was first published by Chatto and Windus in 1961, and is a classic piece of writing on the period. It is fluently and easily written, more a first-hand account and analysis than a historical tract. **Added to the original book are valuable introductions by Mark Tully, and Tapan Raychaudhuri, that analyse the Partition and Moon's role in it, including his book. The new edition also contains 7 pages of rare photographs.** A rich and rewarding book for all interested in modern India.

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Saloni and the Stars
Loveleen Kacker
Bhopal, the city of hills and lakes, is the setting for this Saloni adventure. Saloni and her friends are thick with nawabs in marelis and a big mystery unfolds, the likes of which they were not prepared for. What with twanging Sitar strings and snakes, the five of them have more excitement than they can handle.
HarperCollins Publishers India, 1998, pp.108, Rs.50.00

The Jungle Book
Rudyard Kipling
This specially adapted version for young readers begins with Mowgli, the Man-cub's initiation into jungle life, and goes on to describe his relationship with the beautifully characterised animals of the Seonee jungles. The reader moves from adventure to adventure with them till Mowgli grows up and is ready to leave the jungle to be with his own kind.
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 1998, pp.95, Rs.30.00

Kunnu the Cub
Savita Shetty
Woven around a naughty, endearing tiger cub and his escapades, this little novel will be loved by seven to ten year olds. Read about Kunnu's life in the jungle, his trials and tribulations in the circus, his brave acts in the zoo..... and many more encounters.
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 1998, pp.134, Rs.35.00

Emma
Jane Austen
In this specially adapted version for young readers, the book brings to life the small world of Highbury with the well-meaning, rambling Miss Bates, the selfish, querulous Mr. Woodhouse, the foolish, shallow Harriet and the supremely egotistical Mr. and Mrs. Elton. There is vivid humour and gentleness in her portrait of young Emma, and a very skilful development of her relationship with Mr. Knightley. The novel illustrates her gift for irony and satire at its best.
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 1998, pp.121, Rs.30.00

A Mythological Mosaic : A Pantheon of Tales from Indian Scriptures
Thangam Krishnan
Specially retold for children in a dramatic yet simple language, these stories of gods and goddesses, kings, queens, princes and demons—while retaining all the magical elements of the originals—are a reservoir of ancient wisdom, inspiration and entertainment.
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Just a Second and Other Stories
Ramendra Kumar
An engrossing collection of scintillating stories replete with emotion, subtle humour and adventure, captivating episodes and lively characters make the stories memorable and very readable.
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 1997, pp.96, Rs.30.00

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
R.L. Stevenson
One of the best-known thrillers ever written, this book is the spine-chilling story of a split personality and truly focuses on the suggestion that man is not one person, but two.
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Milestone 50 : Stories from India's Freedom Struggle
R.K. Murthi
This book brings alive some glorious moments of India's freedom struggle. The incidents have been specially recreated for today's youth with an eye on the dramatic element—the outcome is a collection of stories that help us relive and evoke memories of the hardships borne valiantly by these extraordinary men and women.
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 1997, pp.126, Rs.35.00

Stories of Guru Nanak
Surjit Singh Kalra
This is a collection of twelve short stories from the life and times of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. Each story has its own little moral, which has been highlighted in a very simple manner. Precise, witty and interesting, each one of these stories would appeal to young readers immensely.
Pitambar Publishing Company (P) Ltd, 1998, pp.63, Rs.95.00 £4.99, $7.50

Tales from Mahatma Gandhi's Life
R.K. Murthi
This book provides a glimpse into the multifaceted personality of the Father of the Nation—a national leader, astute politician, author, journalist, pacifist, naturopath—all these rolled into one. The incidents selected from the Mahatma's life have been retold in an interesting manner, with the fictional element woven into the real-life stories. The book is not only fun but also educative.
Pitambar Publishing Company (P) Ltd, 1998, pp.60, Rs.40.00

Tales of Lord Brahma
R.K. Murthi
Who are the gods and goddesses of the Hindu faith? This slim volume contains six stories that are built around Lord Brahma. How does he drive sense into Devendra? Why does he have just one temple to call his own? The answers to these and more are what these six simple, humorous tales are all about.
Pitambar Publishing Company (P) Ltd, 1998, pp.48, Rs.26.00

Tales of Lord Krishna
Dr. Ramlal Verma
This collection of twelve stories are incidents from the Mahabharata which talk about how Lord Krishna's wise and prompt actions help the Pandavas win the war against their opponents.
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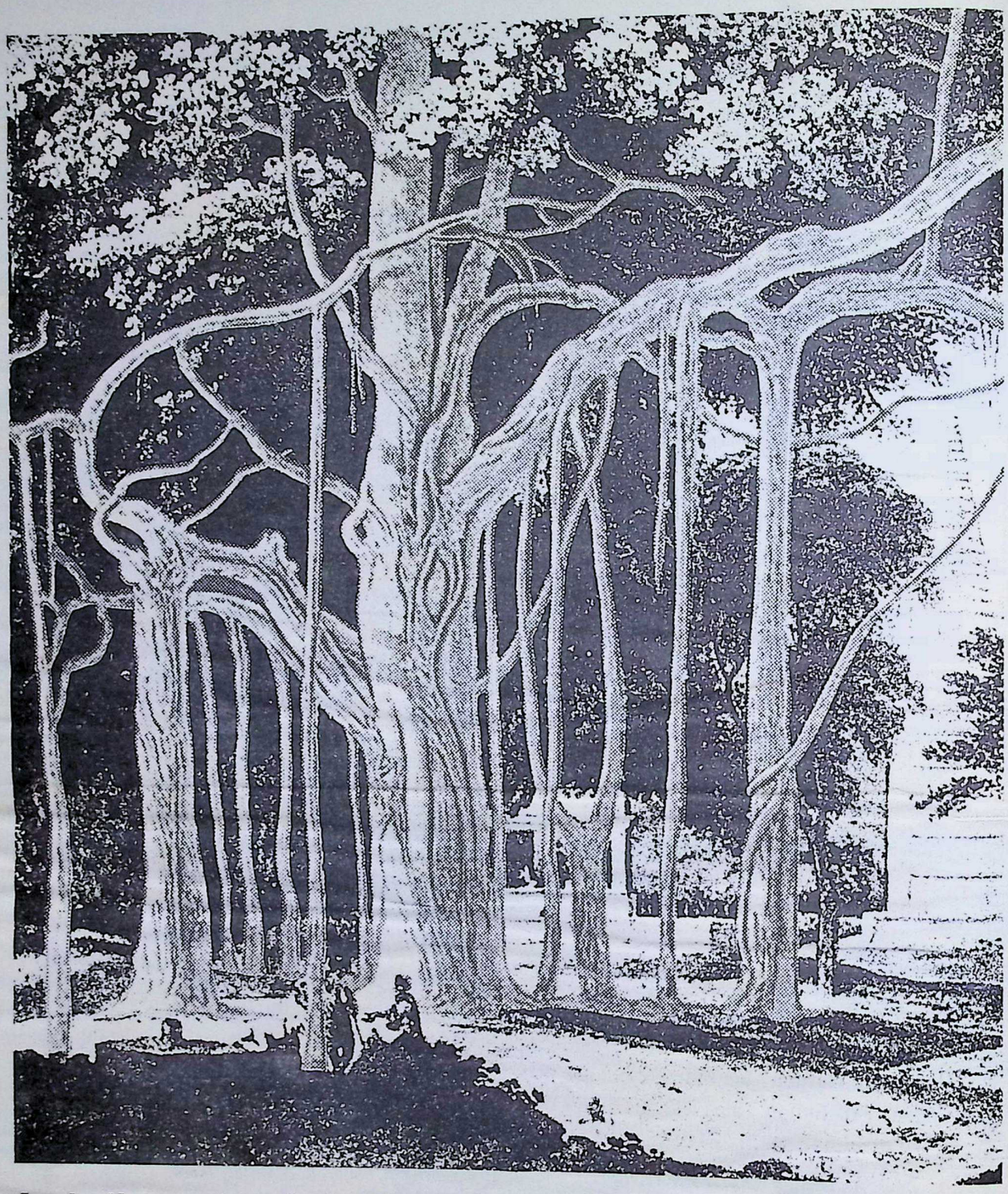

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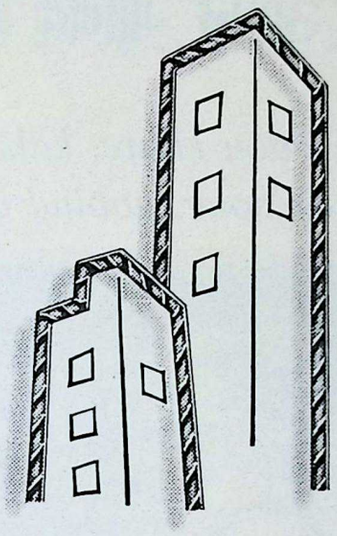

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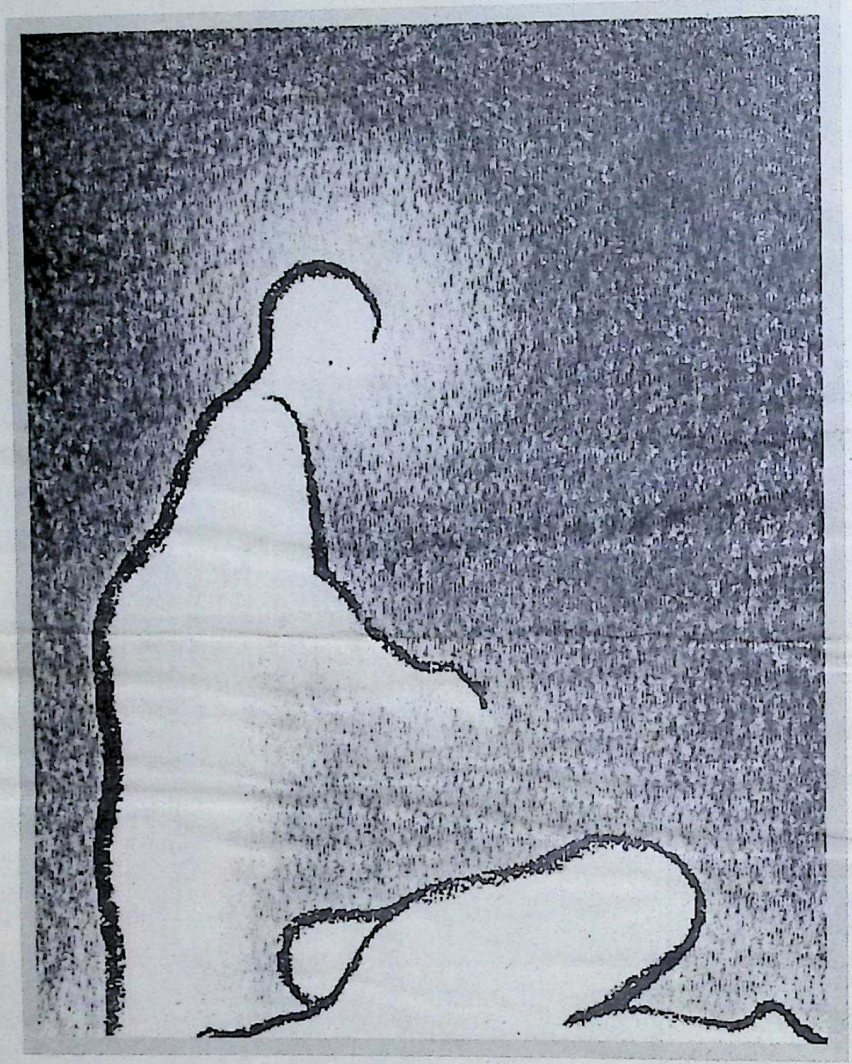

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